Lost Legions of Carthage by LEROY YERXA

fantastic ADVENTURES

JUNE
25¢

GENIE OF BAGDAD

by WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

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Be at your Best

These are simple obligations, to our country, to our men at the front, and to ourselves.

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But as you work, don't forget to play. Play is the great equalizer. Make it part of your life also. Step forth. Go places. Meet people. Cultivate old friends and make new ones—lots of them. And try to be at your best always. Look your neatest. Be your sweetest. Swap a smile for a tear. Trade a laugh for a frown. Don't let down. Keep smiling. Keep going. That's the way the boys at the front would like it.

* * *

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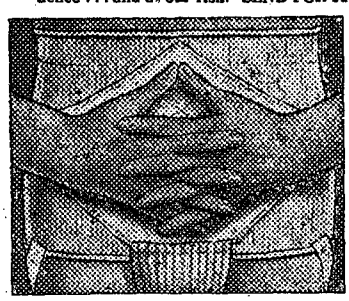

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Standish, Mich.

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☆ "Received the Commander about a week ago. To say that I am well pleased with it would be putting it mildly—I can see that it fills a long felt want, giving the needed support and a most comfortable feeling. I never miss putting it on the first thing in the morning. Enclosed is my check for another."
J. C. McG.
St. Paul, Minn.

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P. N.
Fort Knox, Ky.

Above are just a few of the many unsolicited testimonials for the Commander that we receive regularly. Originals of these and others are on file.

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CONTENTS PAGE

fantastic ADVENTURES

JUNE 1943

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

STORIES

SKY IMP (Short) ..... by Chester S. Geier 10
Bob Lennox faced the scorn of his mates when a Nazi ran him out of the sky. But the Nazi had help!

STUPORMAN (Novelet) ..... by Robert Bloch 22
Sometimes we wish we could make our dreams come true . . . well here was a machine that did it! But . . .

I'LL BE THERE WITH MUSIC (Novelet) ..... by Berkeley Livingston .. 38
Don't ever say "blow me down" when Gabriel is around—or even just an ordinary guy named Gabriel!

STENTON'S SHADOW (Short) ..... by David Wright O'Brien 56
Stenton's shadow was different—it followed him around because of a crime he had committed, and . . .

LOST LEGIONS OF CARTHAGE (Novelet) ..... by Leroy Yerxa 72
When the tread of elephant feet once again rocks the Alps, then shall Hannibal and his men return!

GENIE OF BAGDAD (Novelet) ..... by William P. McGivern 108
History was changed when a modern girl landed in the middle of ancient Bagdad and told stories . . .

HAVE YOU SEEN ME? (Short) ..... by Richard Vardon 142
Here was one guy who had reason to ask this question—because he really wanted to know where he was.

CITADEL OF HATE (Novelet) ..... by Lee Francis 154
Terror lived again in Haiti as the dead ruler, Christophe, came back to life to lead his zombies!

ALMOST HUMAN (Short) ..... by Tarleton Fiske 184
"Junior" was only a metal man with an artificial brain. Inventive genius made him almost human!

FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook 6
Romance of the Elements 21
The Remarkable Dance of the Bees ... 54
The Cyclotron Versus Cancer 71
Must All Living Things Have Parents? 107
Radium Foxes 141
Introducing the Author 196
Reader's Page 197
Warriors of Other Worlds 208

Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley, illustrating a scene from "Genie of Bagdad." Back cover painting by Malcolm Smith, depicting "Warriors of Other Worlds." Illustrations by Robert Fuqua; Magarian; Rod Ruth; Robert Gibson Jones; Julian S. Krupa

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JUNE 1943

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VOLUME 5
NUMBER 6

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★ **The Midnight Assignation,** by **QUEVEDO:** A sly Lothario, bound for his lady's bedroom falls into the clutches of the law.

★ **Forbidden Sweets. A BARON MUNCHAUSEN Tale:** The Baron's attempt to reform an empire upsets the love life of Miss Killnariska.

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

USUALLY this department is full of fantastic things, but this time we would like to step out of character and make a suggestion that isn't fantastic at all. In fact, it's something solid and pertinent to the future peace of the world, and especially concerning American Hemispheric Solidarity.

Why not, say we, make the teaching of the languages of the Latin American countries a compulsory subject in our schools? These two continents ought to get together and work together to the fullest extent beginning right now, and make the world after the war a better place to live in insofar as international relationships are concerned.

Let's give our youngsters a break, and hand 'em a convenient tool to help work out that future to which we are now committing them!

AUTHOR DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN writes us from Texas with the saddest tale of all. He joined the air force, and wound up the first day of his arrival quarantined with his entire group under a scarlet fever quarantine! The whole group is out now, but poor Dave was idle for 28 days without a typewriter! The loss is certainly ours!

BEGINNING next month we are going to institute a new feature, not a regular feature, but just something we'll hand you from time to time. It's our own "Fantastic Adventures' Hall of Fame." And believe you us, it'll be the toughest place to get into our authors have ever seen! Next month we'll give you a list of several stories published since the inception of *Fantastic Adventures* which have made history and drawn down acclaim that merits their inclusion in our new fame department.

ALL this is started by the sensational reception given to a yarn we're already realizing is one of the finest ever published in our pages. It's "Furlough From Eternity," by that same David Wright O'Brien! We bow low before a really fine achievement!

LADIES and gentlemen, meet Mr. Berkeley Livingston! Our newest new writer appears in his initial effort in this issue with "I'll Be There With Music"; and take it from us, the lad is *there! All* there! This little tale rings the bell right down inside us somewhere, because it's a grand little yarn, and because it shows real knowledge of the people in it. It all goes to prove that if you write about the people you know, you don't have to be a genius to write a fine story! Livingston is no genius, but you'll see him again—and again!

SPEAKING of realism and local color and real people, Lee Francis comes up this month with a yarn based on that fantastic emperor of Voodoo and Zombieism, Henri Christophe. The illustrations by Robert Fuqua are also authentic. We think you'll get a kick out of both.

CHESTER S. GEIER returns with a gremlin story, "Sky Imp." This clever little story, Chester, and we congratulate you on it! Julian S. Krupa thought it was well done, too, and insisted on doing the illustration.

IT GIVES us a nostalgic pain to present another of David Wright O'Brien's stories from our dwindling supply of his work still remaining unpublished. "Stenton's Shadow" is another of those unusual idea yarns that he makes his specialty. It is guaranteed to please.

ANOTHER writer new to our pages—war certainly brings new faces!—is Richard Vardon with "Have You Seen Me?" The best way to answer that question is to read the story. And if you have seen "me," we believe Richard Vardon would like to know where! You'll understand what we're driving at when you read the yarn.

NATURALLY! Huh? Oh, of course! We *always* have a Lefty Feep yarn. . . . This time it's "Stuporman," a parody on you know who! Trust Robert Bloch to make with the quips on this one! It's a nifty. And aside, readers, we're hinting that you look at the illustration rather closely—because that's Robert Bloch himself in the illustration! Yep, the Margarians pulled a fast one on Bob this time (they're old friends) and dug out a photo to work into the illustration.

LEROY YERXA piles on the wordage this month with "Lost Legions of Carthage,"

(Continued on page 8)

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Help yourself get the job you want in the Army . . .

PASS HIGH ON THE INDUCTION "I. Q." TEST

YOUR future military life, your rank, your pay, your job, depends in part on the grade you achieve on your induction general classification test. As a wise man once said, "An opportunity well taken is the only weapon of advantage." The time to prepare is NOW, before you take your test.

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- Arithmetic (15 Fascinating Chapters).
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- Tests in the Navy.

Now Be Very Practical About Yourself

Take advantage of the help that is offered you here. **"PRACTICE FOR THE ARMY TESTS"** has been compiled to help men like you. Not only yourself, but your family, and the army, want to see that you get the job for which you are best qualified. **"PRACTICE FOR THE ARMY TESTS"** is a book containing complete and simplified material along the lines of the questions given on the test—tells how to answer them quickly and easily. It gives you a real opportunity to go to your test with the self assurance "that I am ready." Here's why. The ABC simplicity of this startling book will gear your mind to the rapid-fire answer-technique so characteristic of I. Q. test. It helps you brush up on vocabulary, mathematical formulas, cube counting, and all the other special techniques that you should master if you want to do yourself justice on your exam.

Remember, the men who will decide what job you are to have in your military career are personnel officers who have been thoroughly trained in the proper use of each man's abilities and aptitudes . . . and remember they are looking, yes, seeking out the men who will stand above the average. One of those men may be you. Will you be one of the 95,000 who will attend Officers' Candidate Schools this year? Will you be one of the 75,000 who will be commissioned? To enter one of these schools you must make a really good score on the General Classification Test. Will you make the grade? Will your mark be high enough to allow you to enter Officer Candidate School? If you want one of these ratings, and we are sure you do, brush up . . . before you take the tests.

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 6)

which is exactly what the title implies. Hannibal and his elephants once more cross the Alps to do battle! This time against the Nazis . . .

ANOTHER of our "lost" authors, soldier William P. McGivern, does the cover story this month, based on a cover painting by H. W. McCauley, featuring the ever popular Mac Girl. "Genie of Bagdad" is a fantasy based on Scheherazade. You'll blink when you find out who Scheherazade really is!

THIS month we introduce Berkeley Livingston in our "Introducing The Author" department. As we write this, we haven't gotten a photo of him yet, so if you find one, it'll be a surprise to us—but there's still hope, because that page hasn't gone to press.

WE'VE still got a lot of elements to run through in our "Romance of the Elements" series; this month's offering by Rod Ruth being Neon. We discover from reading your letters that many of you have collected these feature pages and are building up a scrapbook which will be extremely valuable as a reference, and to give the history of the elements in easy-to-grasp form.

YOU'LL notice we've discontinued the "Correspondence Corner" for the duration of the war. The reason for this, in spite of the fact that it was immensely popular, is the possibility that it might be used as a medium of communication both deliberately, and by accident, of information of value to the enemy. Therefore, we will not carry this feature until the present emergency is ended.

EVERYONE has seen movies of oriental snake charmers playing their skull flutes as a cobra dances in front of them. We are all led to believe that it is the music which is charming the snake but nothing could be further from the truth.

Snakes are all deaf to sounds that travel through the air but they are able to "hear" through vibrations that travel through the ground or any other solid conductor in contact with the snake. Then, you ask, how does the snake charmer perform his act? Well, its really quite simple when you know the trick.

The flute is entirely superfluous and only is used to lend an air of mystery to the act. The cobra is "charmed" out of his basket by the snake charmer's continual thumping on the ground and on the basket. When the cobra comes out of the basket, it sees the snake charmer swaying back and forth in a very rhythmic motion and the cobra only imitates this motion and thus appears to be dancing to the music.

EXPERIMENTS conducted at the University of New Hampshire have resulted in the discovery of a new way to treat stored grain so that it will be protected against insects. The process involves the use of a new chemical known as chlorinated nitroethane but called ethide for convenience. The chemical is a clear liquid that has an unmistakable odor. The odor is not offensive or harmful to humans, but the vapors produced when the liquid volatizes is powerful enough to kill all insects found in grain, flour, or furs.

The vapor is so effective that it even penetrates tightly sealed paper bags, compressed cotton, and cardboard to kill insects.

Various tests were made to determine the practicability of the chemical and the results were extremely satisfactory. In one case the ethide was placed on the surface of some grain stored in bins sixty feet deep. The vapor penetrated throughout the bin and killed all the insects. Foodstuffs being shipped in freight cars are protected by putting the ethide in the car and sealing it. Thus far, no cases have been reported where the ethide left any bad effects on the foodstuffs. Even the odor of ethide serves a useful purpose since it can be used to identify which freight cars or gain bins have been "ethidized" with unerring accuracy.

MANY ivory hunters have dreamed about the fabulous wealth that would be theirs if they could find the spot where elephants go to die. But no explorer has yet come out of the jungle claiming to have located the skeletal remains of elephants. Where is this secluded spot, this Valley of Ivory? Well, the fact is that such a place is a myth. Actually, the bones of any animal of the jungle are hard to discover. First of all, dying animals tend to hide and retire deep into the jungle away from other animals. Elephants usually die alone and far away from any civilized community.

There are many reasons why carcasses are so hard to discover. For one thing, decay sets in very rapidly in the tropics. The flesh is gone quickly under attack from carnivorous animals, insects, and carrion birds. The bones become scattered and in a short while mosses, bushes, and other vegetation completely cover the remains from sight. Thus, even a dead elephant would vanish from sight within a year or two.

HOLDING their breath for more than a half-hour at a time is the secret of resistance of

(Continued on page 36)

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Just think! You need no longer be pushed around by a brute twice your size. You need no longer be tortured with fright because you lack confidence in your own ability to take care of yourself. Your loved one can now look up to you, certain that no one will *dare* lay a hand on her while you're around.

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Sky Imp

By CHESTER S. GEIER

They called Bob Lennox a coward when Von Thelm, ace of the Nazi Luftwaffe, ran him out of the skies. Then Bob found the way to make a friend out of his *real* foe!

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BOB LENNOX paused at the turn in the road leading to the little group of stone farm buildings in the distance. He looked back over the way he had come, and it was as though he looked back upon some unpleasant memory of the past. He knew, now, just what he had to do. That lonely walk had done him good.

He dropped the butt of his cigarette into the dust of the road and ground it into lifelessness with a purposeful heel. Then, squaring his shoulders, he went on.

Lights gleamed from the windows of the farm buildings when Bob Lennox reached them. Evening was deepening swiftly into night, and heavy shadows lay draped over the outwardly peaceful English countryside. Only those who knew would look for the signs of clever camouflaging which hid the fact that the farm buildings and its fields were in reality a British airdrome.

It was several months before the catastrophe of Pearl Harbor. The Nazi Luftwaffe still swept in vicious waves over English cities and towns. American air fighters were making history in the R. A. F. Bob Lennox was one of the many who had volunteered. But in a sense he was almost isolated here, for he was the only American with the tiny 15th R. A. F. pursuit squadron hidden "somewhere" in the north of England. It was this more than anything else which made things so difficult for him.

Lennox took the flagstone path which led to the Commander's office in the main building. He strode stiffly now, eyes fixed straight before him, his broad shoulders set defensively.

Benches were placed along the ivy-covered walls of the main building, and on these sat the pilots of the 15th, their pipes and cigarettes glowing in the shadows. Their drawling British voices were raised in the laughing banter typical of the fighter at ease. But as Lennox passed by a frigid silence fell over them. They sat very still, watching him with hostile, condemnatory eyes. The American's lips twisted bitterly.

Lennox had his hand on the door that led into the main building when suddenly one of them spoke.

"Blimey, did yer see it?" asked a mocking nasal voice. "'is yeller streak even shines at night!"

"And that's only the light from 'is backbone," added another. "Take off 'is British uniform and 'e'd look like 'e'd been dipped in yellow luminol."

LENNOX winced as though struck a physical blow. He entered quickly, shutting the door against the taunting laughter which followed. His eyes blazing, he walked down a short hall and entered what had once been the farmhouse living room.

Little of its former quaint, sturdy furnishings were in evidence. The pictures had been taken down from the walls and in their places hung maps, charts, and bulletin boards. The rug had been rolled up and placed in a corner, and the bare boards of the floor were tracked and scuffed. A log burned crackingly in the stone fireplace. At a desk, once a kitchen table, but covered now with telephones and papers, sat Major James Carewe, squadron commander of the 15th R. A. F. air base.

Carewe looked up as Lennox approached the desk. He was a personification of everything British, from his trimly-tailored uniform to his military mustache and the stubby briar pipe gripped between his teeth.

"Eh? Oh—Lennox." Carewe's manner became abruptly perfunctory and slightly patronizing. He took his pipe from his mouth and leaned back in the chair. "What can I do for you?"

"I'd like to make a special request,

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sir," Lennox began. "You see, the attitude of the men toward me hasn't changed ever since that—that Channel incident. And—well, I just can't stand it any more. I want your permission to go over the Channel and fight von Thelm."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Lennox. There's a rule, you'll remember, forbidding solo flights near enemy territory. Makes it too easy to fall into a Jerry trap."

"I know that, sir, but this is a different case. You know that once a week, on a Wednesday, von Thelm flies a little way over the Channel as a challenge to Allied pilots. He's too self-confident and conceited to make a trap of it, however."

"That makes little difference," Carewe said, smiling wryly. "One of the reasons for the rule was to prevent foolhardy pilots from engaging von Thelms and getting shot down. In some ways it was an official admission of the fact that von Thelm is a better fighter than anyone we have."

"But you've just got to give me this chance, sir!" Lennox pleaded. "I won't be able to stay with the squadron if you don't—or in England, either, for that matter. No one will have anything to do with a man branded a coward."

Carewe frowned impatiently. "Oh, come now, Lennox. What you're asking is a bit too much, you know. You may be a volunteer American and entitled to special privileges and all that sort of thing, but we have certain rules and regulations which we can't allow even you chappies to ignore. Besides, General Headquarters would break me if I permitted you to do what you're asking."

LENNOX dropped his gaze to his hands, his square, brown face twisted despairingly. Suddenly he looked up again, his eyes agleam.

"See here, sir," he said eagerly. "If official permission of my request is impossible, what about unofficial permission?"

"Eh? I'm rather afraid that I don't understand you, Lennox."

"I mean this, sir. Let me have a ship to go over the Channel and fight von Thelm. It can then be made to look as though I had taken it without your permission"

Carewe shook his head slowly. "I can't do that. Von Thelm hasn't yet been beaten in a dogfight. You'd be shot down just as surely as you're standing here now. We might be able to spare the loss of a man, but hardly that of a ship, I'm afraid."

Lennox leaned across the desk, his youthful features aged by a savage earnestness. "Major Carewe, put yourself in my place. I've become an outcast, a pariah. None of the others will have anything to do with me. They think I'm a coward—that I deliberately ran from von Thelm and his crew of vultures that day over the Channel. I've got to prove that I'm not.

"Look, sir. You're a fighting man and you know that, second only to his country, a fighting man places his honor and integrity above all else. I know, if such a circumstance should ever occur, that you'd never hesitate to avenge a slight upon your courage. Then suppose you were called a coward because of an incident over which you had no means of control. Wouldn't you make every effort to reinstate yourself in the eyes of others? Would anything in life ever be the same again if you were denied the opportunity? Surely, the loss of a ship isn't too great a price to pay for redemption."

Carewe was chewing the tip of his mustache, his eyes thoughtful. He rose from the chair and began pacing the

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floor. Abruptly, he faced the American.

"I shouldn't do this, Lennox," he said. "But you've made it a personal question of one fighting man to another. In that way I can't obstruct your desire for vindication without reflection upon my own honor as a fighting man. I'll give you your chance—but remember the responsibility for the outcome will be yours and yours alone."

"That's all I ask, sir."

"All right, then. Here's what I'll do. Tomorrow is Wednesday and von Thelm will, no doubt, be at the usual place. In the morning I'll order a plane checked and warmed up for a special flight. While I'm ostensibly giving its pilot instructions, you can climb in and take over. Good luck." Carewe extended his hand and Lennox gripped it briefly.

IN BED later that night, Lennox found his thoughts peaceful for the first time in weeks. He knew that this night was very likely to be his last, but more than a year of fighting in China and England had given him a warrior's fatalism. He put his hands behind his head and smiled slightly in the darkness. Well, tomorrow he'd show them something.

If he had been British, this really wouldn't be necessary. His explanation would have been accepted readily and without bitterness, for mysterious, inexplicable things were always happening to pilots in the air. But the fact that he was an American and the thing that had happened to him had cost the lives of four British pilots had cast an entirely different light upon the matter.

The squadron had been returning to base after having, in conjunction with two other pursuit squadrons, successfully chased away a formation of Nazi bombers from a factory district to the south. The 15th had two to their credit, and not having lost a single ship, they were feeling pretty cocky. Then, sweeping in from the Channel, a squadron of Messerschmitts had burst upon them. The vulture insignia on their fuselages announced them to be under the leadership of Eric von Thelm, the cunning, seemingly invincible Nazi ace.

Air war tactics of the present time are vastly different from what they were during World War I. Where once the fighting was an affair of individual, aerial combats, it is now one of formation, precision teamwork and co-ordination. At speeds of almost 400 miles per hour, everything happens with lightning-like rapidity, and the slightest mistake in timing can cause the doom of several comrade planes in a matter of seconds. That was what happened to Lennox.

The favorite maneuver of the 15th was to cruise along in an open V formation, flight commander in the lead, with a top guard flying some 500 feet above and another at an equal distance below. Upon engaging an enemy squadron, top and bottom guards would converge upon the leading enemy planes, their machine guns and wing cannon flaming a leaden hail of death. Usually, these leading enemy ships would go down in flames, and then the rest of the squadron, an actual flying wedge, would sweep into the break, raking with their guns on both sides as they roared by. This usually accounted for several more of the enemy, then the formation would break up into groups of two and go after the survivors—if any cared to remain for further combat, which they seldom did.

The 15th had swung around to face the onward hurtling Nazi ships. Lennox was top guard, O'Gilvey bottom guard. Flight commander Dick Halsey was leading the squadron.

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AT A RADIOED command from Halsey, Lennox and O'Gilvey began their converging movement. Lennox knew a moment of exultation as his Spitfire screamed down toward the approaching Nazi Messerschmitts. Then he pressed the button in the control stick which electrically activated his guns—and his eager confidence exploded in sudden, utter horror. They remained silent, inactive.

Frantically, Lennox pressed that control button—again, again, and again, until his thumb was numb with the pain. But nothing happened. Desperately, he joggled the stick, even stamped with one foot on the bottom of the plane in the hopes that the shocks would untangle any snarl in the electrical connections that might have occurred. Again no results—and all the while the oncoming Messerschmitts roared closer. Streaks of flaming tracer began to lick toward the Spitfires.

Helpless because of the inactivity of his guns, there was only one thing left for Lennox to do, and he did it. He banked, climbed for altitude, and roared away from the battle.

Frustration, appall, rage, and grief raked him in a vicious cross-fire. At a safe distance, he circled to watch impotently the ensuing catastrophe to the 15th.

O'Gilvey roared up, his guns flaming. But the wiley von Thelm, seizing the opportunity offered by Lennox's withdrawal from the fight, led his Messerschmitts up and over the 15th's V formation. Then, with altitude and a rear position to their favor, the Nazis swooped down in what became simply a massacre. Flight commander Dick Halsey was among the first to go down in twisted, flaming wreckage, and, deprived not only of his cool sure leadership but of a battle tactic which had been effective so long as to have become a habit, the Spitfires were demoralized into utter, senseless confusion. Only a little more than half managed to reach their hidden base again.

Lennox had explained to the wrathful pilots of the 15th, and for a moment they had believed him. Then one tried the apparently faulty guns in Lennox's Spitfire—and the resulting blast had all but knocked in one wall of the barn. There was nothing wrong with the guns, then, and a check-up of the electrical firing connections brought to light nothing which might have caused their silence during the battle over the Channel.

Called up before an official board of inquiry, Lennox repeated his story. He told it simply and without prejudice. Impressed by his earnestness and sorrow and his record of action in China and England, the board had released him without sentence or stigma. But Lennox had become an outcast among the pilots of the 15th. While not actually convinced that he was a coward, they taunted him as such, resenting the fact that he, an American, had been responsible for the deaths of four British fliers, innocent or not. The only one at the airdrome who sympathized with him was Benjie Callahan, the wiry, little mechanic who presided over the repair shop in the barn. This was because Benjie was a Free State Irishman and also a firm believer in Gremlins.

ACCORDING to Benjie, it was the Gremlins who were responsible for Lennox' downfall. And Lennox, grateful for the little Irishman's friendship, pretended to agree. Lennox had heard of the Gremlins before, of course, for they were a modern legend. No one knew just how or when it had originated, but tales of this mischievous little people of the air were already known to pilots the length and breadth of Eng-

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land. The pilots of the 15th were no exception and had even made their own individual contributions to the form and content of the myth.

The nomenclature is slightly on the whacky side, but the Gremlins do not seem to mind. Male Gremlins are just that. Female Gremlins are called Fifinellas, little male Gremlins, Widgets, and little female Gremlins, Flipperty-Gibbets. These are the ordinary kind of Gremlins, but as might be expected, there are other varieties. Among these are Strato-Gremlins, Night-flying Gremlins, and Nautic-minded Gremlins.

To those who believe—like Benjie—it is the Gremlins who jam controls, clog oil lines, fog windows, cause gasoline leaks, strange engine disturbances, and other inexplicable technical mishaps. They are not intentionally mean, however, but just inqusitive and mischievous. In the latter mood, their favorite form of prey is the over-confident pilot, and in one way or another they always succeed in bringing about a swift return of his inferiority complex.

LENNOX ate his usual solitary breakfast in the mess room. Later he wandered outside, and because no one seemed to be near the barn, he went in to see Benjie Callahan. Benjie was replacing a bullet-riddled aileron, and at sight of Lennox his wizened face split into a red-cheeked grin.

"Well, now, and how be ye this foine mornin'?" he greeted.

Lennox attempted a smile. "Foine," he answered. For a moment his loneliness impelled him to tell Benjie of his plan for redemption, but he thought better of it and instead asked. "See any Gremlins during the night, Benjie?"

"Me?" asked the little Irishman in surprise. "Faith, they wouldn't be a'showin' o' themselves to a groundling like me, Mister Lennox. 'Tis only to pilots that they be seen."

"My mistake, Benjie. But, see here, haven't Hangar-Gremlins made their appearance yet?"

"And sure, now, who knows but one day they may?" Benjie's blue eyes were serious. "Evolution does strange things sometimes. Now I've an idea that—" And Benjie went on to tell Lennox of his special theory of evolution as applied to Gremlins.

Lennox listened with only half his attention. The other half was fixed upon the main building. He didn't have long to wait. Benjie was making the concluding statements of his discourse when the door opened and Carewe's orderly came briskly toward the barn.

The orderly made it a point to ignore Lennox, addressing Benjie as though he were the only person present. "Major's compliments. He says to wheel out a plane and check it. Special flight." With that, he turned and made off for the mess room.

Lennox waited, his body becoming taut with tension. Benjie went to round up his two Cockney assistants, and the trio trotted toward the field, where they pulled aside a camouflaging haystack to reveal the gleaming shape of a Spitfire. They swarmed over it, busy with tools. The orderly came out of the mess room followed by a pilot who was shrugging into a flying jacket, the chin strap of his helmet gripped between his teeth. They went into the main building together.

Lennox wore his own flying jacket, with his helmet stuffed into one of the pockets. Trying to appear casual, he strolled over to the Spitfire which was now in the final stage of its check-over, motors idling.

"Surprise!" Lennox told Benjie. "I'm the one who's taking her up. You were talking so much that I didn't get a

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chance to tell you before."

"Well, now!" Benjie said, wonderingly.

And Lennox, as though he were on a mission of the utmost urgency, climbed into the cockpit and pulled on his helmet. He signalled for the chocks to be pulled away from the wheels.

Benjie hesitated a moment. Events did not seem quite right to him somehow. But he shrugged and relayed Lennox's order to his two asistants. The chocks came away and the mechanics moved into the clear. Lennox gunned the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, and the Spitfire taxied down the field, to take off seconds later into the clear, blue morning sky.

CLIMBING steadily for altitude, Lennox did not once look back. He knew that the roar of his motors had warned Carewe and that by now the squadron commander was signalling frantically for him to land. Carewe, of course, would have to put on a good act so that no suspicion would fall upon him later. He was. The earphones hanging from the instrument panel began to buzz urgently. Carewe was now trying to signal him by radio, but Lennox had not donned the earphones in anticipation of this and now he ignored them completely.

Lennox levelled off and pointed the nose of his Spitfire toward the Channel. The direction he was taking would lead him straight toward the sector patrolled by von Thelm. His lips tightened as he thought of the Nazi ace. He knew that his chances of coming out of the duel alive were so slim as to amount almost to nothing at all. Von Thelm already had more than a score of British ships to his credit, and these included not only the ones he had shot down while accompanied by his own squadron but also those he had bested in single combat. In the latter case he had triumphed over many veteran British aces. Lennox had no delusions as to his own fighting abilities, for he knew that most of the men who had gone down under von Thelm's guns had been as good, if not better, than himself.

Lennox squinted ahead. In the distance he could now make out a thin, blue strip, swiftly widening, which marked the water of the Channel. It wouldn't be long, now. He tried to relax against the strain which was building up within him.

As a matter of habit, he glanced at his instruments. There was a sudden, strange flickering before his eyes. He thought it must be from the strain to which he was subjecting them and blinked rapidly several times. When he looked at the instruments again, he gasped in abrupt amazement, almost losing control of the ship.

Standing on the rim of the speed indicator was a bizarre, fantastic little figure. No more than six inches high, it wore a little, red jacket and brown corduroy pants, the bottoms of which were stuffed into tiny, black patent-leather boots with rubber suction soles. Tiny horns jutted from either side of its head, and between these, pushed back rakishly, was a green derby hat. It had a large, red nose and a wrinkled, brown face, which, at another time, might have worn an expression of grinning impishness, but which right now looked very sheepish and contrite.

ABRUPT memory of the stories he had heard from Benjie and others came back to Lennox. He knew on the instant just what it was he saw.

"A Gremlin!" he husked. "Heaven help me—a Gremlin!"

"Uh, huh," the little figure standing on the speed indicator affirmed timidly, in an astonishingly loud, bass voice.

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"But—but you just can't be!" Lennox croaked. "Gremlins are just a lot of fairy-tale stuff."

A moment's trace of sardonic amusement came into the tiny, brown features. "You see me, don't you? And I could give you a sample of applied Gremlinology on your aircraft which wouldn't leave another doubt in your head, but there's no time for that. By way of introduction, I'm Gremlin Bob. We Gremlins have no names, you see, and sort of adopt the first name of the first person to see one of us."

"Yeah," said Lennox dazedly. "Yeah, I see." He licked his lips. "Well, what do you want? What're you doing here anyway?"

Gremlin Bob's pixie features became once more hang-dog. "I came to apologize. I—I'm the one who did it."

Lennox frowned in bewilderment. "Did what?"

"Jammed your guns."

"What!"

"Uh, huh."

"Then you're the one responsible for all the trouble I've had to go through!" Lennox snapped wrathfully. He made an abrupt grab for the tiny shape.

Gremlin Bob skipped nimbly to the altimeter dial and spread his hands imploringly. "Now wait a moment," he pleaded. "I know just how you feel, but let me explain."

"Explain!" Lennox snorted. "As if that would fix things up now."

"It was this way," began Gremlin Bob. "You and the others were all feeling so cocky that day after chasing away the bombers that I just couldn't resist the temptation to throw a little scare into you. When those Messerschmitts appeared, I jammed the electrical firing connections of your guns." He gestured placatingly as Lennox made another reach for him.

"Wait until you hear the rest of it, won't you? The jamming was only meant to be temporary, please believe me. I'd intended to fix things up again, just as soon as you'd been frightened sufficiently. But just then a Fifinella happened along." Gremlin Bob looked as though his last statement finished the explanation.

But Lennox frowned. "Well?" he demanded.

Gremlin Bob grinned ruefully. "Fifinellas are female Gremlins, you'll remember, and—well, you know how we Gremlins are about Fifinellas. You pilots made us that way. This one was a peach, and as usual I forgot everything and went after her. By the time I remembered about you and the guns, the battle was over. I just managed to get them fixed up again before that pilot tried them at the drome."

"And now you're too late as usual," Lennox growled. "You know where I'm going now don't you?"

"Uh, huh. To fight von Thelm."

"Yes—and it's all your fault! Do you realize that my chances of coming out of the fight alive are almost none at all?"

GREMLIN BOB hung his head. "Uh, huh. But if there's anything I can do—"

"Do! Now?" Lennox grimaced in disgust. And then his eyes lighted. "Say—there *is* something you can do! Look here. Could you get into von Thelm's ship?"

Gremlin Bob brightened. "Easiest thing there is!"

"All right, then, here's what you can do. Get into von Thelm's ship and sort of complicate things for him. Don't jam his guns or anything like that, however, because I merely want the fight to be placed upon a more equal basis. Understand?"

"Uh huh," Gremlin Bob answered.

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"What you want me to do is to handicap him, like in games or sports, where a skillful player handicaps himself so as to give an equal chance to another not as good."

Lennox nodded. "That's it. Only this handicap will be forced on von Thelm whether he wants the fight on an equal basis or not. And, if I know the Nazis in general and von Thelm in particular, he wouldn't."

"I'll take care of it," Gremlin Bob promised. Suddenly he darted up to the viewplate. "Oh, oh, here comes von Thelm now! So long."

There was a bright, blue flash, and when Lennox blinked the lights out of his eyes, Gremlin Bob was gone. Lennox compressed his lips into a thin, tense line, falling by force of long habit into his fighter's crouch. Down below glistened the waters of the Channel. And, diving out of the clouds with his guns flaming, came von Thelm.

Lennox side-slipped hastily and came around in a half circle. Von Thelm's Messerschmitt, with the vulture insignia on the fuselage, roared by, its guns spitting into empty space. But the Nazi had only been eluded for a moment. The nose of his Messerschmitt tilted abruptly skyward in an aerial somersault, and when he levelled out of it, he was diving down directly behind Lennox.

Lennox looped frantically, and none too soon, for the Nazi's bullets had already chewed several holes through the Spitfire's tail assembly. From then on, Lennox drew the fight into a chase, weaving, dodging, spinning, using every trick at his command to keep out of the line of the Nazi's guns. He wondered desperately how long it would take Gremlin Bob to handicap von Thelm, for minutes had passed already and as far as he could see, there was no lessening in the Nazi's skillful attacks.

And then there was the now familiar flickering before Lennox's eyes. When it had gone, there was Gremlin Bob, clinging to his perch on the rim of the speed indicator.

LENNOX stared in growing horror. Something was wrong — terribly, radically wrong. Gremlin Bob looked as if a tornado had struck him. His little immaculate clothes were disarranged and torn. His green derby was gone, and his left eye was black and swollen shut.

"Run for it!" Gremlin Bob gasped. "All hell's broken loose!"

"But what's the matter?" Lennox demanded. "Why didn't you handicap von Thelm as you were supposed to?"

Gremlin Bob took what seemed to be a deep breath. "We both overlooked something. The Nazis have Gremlins, too, you see. The one in von Thelm's aircraft is the nastiest customer I've ever run across. We English Gremlins feed on used postage stamps, but Nazi Gremlins drink stale beer—and well, it does something to their dispositions, not to mention their physique. The one in von Thelm's aircraft was a good nine inches tall, and he gave me to understand in no uncertain terms that he wouldn't have me practicing in his territory."

"Damn!" Lennox whispered in consternation. Without Gremlin Bob to help him, all his new-found hopes went crashing to destruction. He couldn't just run from von Thelm, for there was no place for him to go. To land now on English soil after what had happened would mean court martial and disgrace. To attempt to fight von Thelm with the Nazi in full possession of his power meant certain doom.

Lennox kicked rudder sharply as a line of flaming tracer cut suddenly across his windshield. In his disap-

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pointed dismay, he'd forgotten that the Nazi ace was clinging tenaciously to his tail, and now von Thelm had almost managed to creep up beside him. Lennox rolled aside desperately, and there was a pattering, hail-like sound on his left wing. With a brief glance from the corner of his eye, he saw a neat line of black holes stretching along it. He dived, and then, with power full on, took up a course parallel to the Channel coastline. Scenting the unmistakable sign of a sure kill, von Thelm pursued relentlessly.

"We've got to do something!" Lennox gritted.

"Uh huh," answered Gremlin Bob. But what?"

Lennox had a sudden idea. "Look," he said. "Why don't you round up a gang of your Gremlin friends and then go after that Nazi Gremlin in von Thelm's plane? It ought to be a snap for a bunch of you to run him out. Then you could do whatever you wanted."

GREMLIN BOB shook his bare head. "Wouldn't work, I'm afraid."

"Why not?" Lennox demanded impatiently.

"You're forgetting that one Nazi Gremlin implies more. If I rounded up a gang, the Nazi Gremlin would round one up, too, and we wouldn't stand a chance with their size."

Lennox groaned, then bit his lip in desperate, aching thought. Of a sudden, he released a yell of triumph.

"I've got it!"

Gremlin Bob removed his hands from his battered eardrums and blinked his one good eye at Lennox. "Got what?" he wanted to know.

"The solution!" Lennox cried. "There's only one thing that could draw that Nazi Gremlin from von Thelm's ship, and that's a Fifinella! Do you see?"

"I certainly do!" replied Gremlin Bob. He leered delightedly. "A Fifinella will turn the trick, if nothing else will." And with that, he vanished amid his usual bright, blue flash.

Lennox roared along for a time, at full speed. Frequent glances to his rear showed that von Thelm was still holding doggedly to the Spitfire's tail. Obviously, the Nazi hadn't had a solitary duel for such a long time that he was willing to pursue this latest victim to Kingdom Come just to break the monotony.

Lennox grinned. Well, this time von Thelm was going to get more than he had bargained for.

When Lennox judged that Gremlin Bob had had ample time to accomplish his task, he pulled back the stick, sending the Spitfire into a wide, inside loop. Von Thelm's Messerschmitt flashed by, and then, realizing what had happened, the Nazi banked sharply and came around.

Lennox levelled just as von Thelm straightened out. For an instant the rear of the Messerschmitt was in his sights, and Lennox instinctively pressed the firing button in the stick. His guns thundered flaming tracer, and his mouth split in a wide grin as he saw a line of black dots crawl along the tail of the Messerschmitt and chew pieces out of the rudder.

The tight ball of tension in Lennox' stomach vanished, and his eyes lighted with confidence and hope. Things were evened up, now. Von Thelm was matched in a sky duel at last.

For long months later, the people along the Channel coast talked about that battle in the sky. It was a never-to-be-forgotten exhibition of cunning and skill. Again and again the Messerschmitt would pull out of some intricate

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maneuver designed to catch the Spitfire in a trap, but always the Spitfire would dodge free, its guns striking into some new part of its opponent. The Spitfire was like a dog goading a vicious bull, grown clumsy in its rage. It harried, worried at the Messerschmitt until the Nazi ship was literally filled with holes. And then, as if unable to bear longer the clever, nimble series of dodges and nips to which it was being subjected, the Messerschmitt suddenly broke from the battle and roared out into the Channel.

But the Spitfire wouldn't allow the battle to end that way. It pursued the Messerschmitt until it whirled in blind, desperate fury. And the duel was suddenly over. For, as the Messerschmitt made an abrupt turn, the Spitfire swung up to meet it, its guns raking from engine housing to tail assembly.

For an instant, the Messerschmitt poised there in the sky as if unable to believe the doom which had come to it. Then, with black smoke curling from its damaged engine, it nosed down and fell, twisting and turning, into the Channel.

Von Thelm, the terror of northern English skies, was gone forever.

IT WASN'T until more than a month later that Lennox saw Gremlin Bob again. Lennox — Lieutenant Robert Lennox, now, and flight commander of the 15th—was returning from a special, secret conference at General Headquarters. It was evening, and the setting sun had stretched long streamers of red and gold across the horizon.

Lennox blinked at a sudden flicker before his eyes. And there was Gremlin Bob, seated on the rim of the speed indicator.

"Hello, there!" Gremlin Bob greeted.

"You!" exclaimed Lennox. "Where have you been all this time?"

Gremlin Bob grinned slyly. He had on a new green derby, and his outfit of little red jacket and corduroy pants was once more immaculate.

"I've been busy raising a family," he answered. "Got the nicest crop of little Widgets and Flipperty-Gibbets you ever saw. I'll bring them around sometime."

"Do that," Lennox seconded, with a smile. "I'll be glad to meet them. But, say, I want to thank you for that favor you did me. Everything worked out beautifully. I got von Thelm, and the only inquiries that the inquiry board made later, were those as to how I had done it. Just look at the medals!"

Gremlin Bob looked. Then his little face screwed up into a grimace of puzzlement. "Favor? Thank me? What're you talking about?"

"Why, surely, you remember how you went after a Fifinella to draw that Nazi Gremlin out of von Thelm's plane?"

"Fifinella?" Gremlin Bob leered reminiscently. "What a cute, little trick she was! She's my wife, now, you know. But about von Thelm—" Gremlin Bob's features dropped in dismay, and then he lifted his green derby and scratched his bald head sheepishly.

"Well, what do you know!" he said. "I clean forgot about it!"

"Forgot about what?" asked Lennox.

"About von Thelm," Gremlin Bob replied, with a rueful expression on his brown, pixie face.

"What!" choked Lennox.

"Uh huh. You know how we Gremlins are about Fifinellas. Well, the one I went after to use on that Nazi Gremlin was such a swell little number that I just forgot about everything and went chasing after her myself!"

The End

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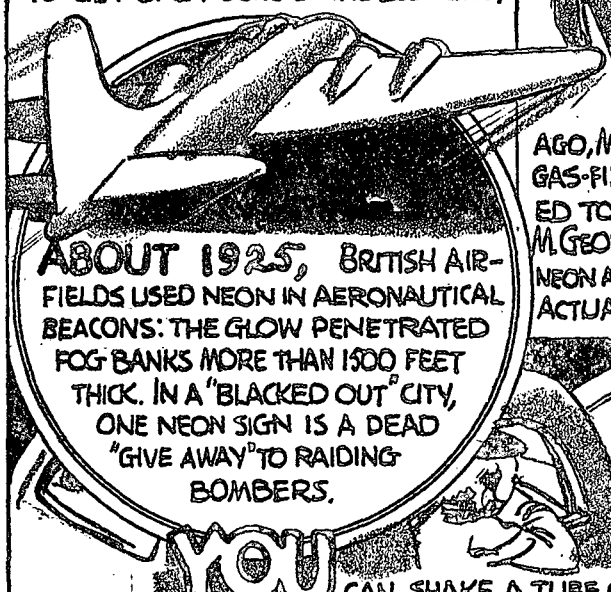
ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS . . . Neon

FIRST SIGN OF NEON WAS THE FLASH OF BRILLIANT CRIMSON LIGHT PROFESSORS RAMSAY AND TRAVERS BEHELD WHILE EXAMINING, SPECTROSCOPICALLY, A TUBE OF VAPOR THEY'D FRACTIONALLY DISTILLED FROM CRUDE ARGON! NEON, PREPARED FROM LIQUID AIR IS REALLY RARE: IT TAKES 44 TONS OF ATMOSPHERE TO GET ONE POUND OF THE ELEMENT!

40 ODD YEARS AGO, MOORE, PIONEER BUILDER OF GAS-FILLED VAPOR LAMPS, WANTED TO TRY OUT NEON. BY 1914, M. GEORGES CLAUDE BUILT 17-FOOT NEON ADVERTISING SIGNS THAT ACTUALLY BURNED 1000 HOURS.



ABOUT 1925, BRITISH AIRFIELDS USED NEON IN AERONAUTICAL BEACONS: THE GLOW PENETRATED FOG BANKS MORE THAN 1500 FEET THICK. IN A "BLACKED OUT" CITY, ONE NEON SIGN IS A DEAD "GIVE AWAY" TO RAIDING BOMBERS.

YOU CAN SHAKE A TUBE OF PURE NEON SEALED IN WITH A LITTLE MERCURY, AND SEE IT GLOW! NEON'S ATOMS EASILY IONIZED, MAKE EXCELLENT ELECTRICAL CONDUCTORS. THIS GAS IS IMPORTANT TO TELEVISION; IS USED IN LIGHTNING ARRESTERS, FOR SPECTROSCOPIC ILLUMINATION. GARAGE MECHANICS TEST CAR IGNITION WITH NEON.

NEON is number 10 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Ne and its atomic weight is 20.2. Neon is a colorless gas. Its boiling point when liquefied is —246°. It is one of the rare gases of the atmosphere, occurring to the extent of about ten parts in one million. It was discovered in 1898 by Sir William Ramsey. In recent years it has become of scientific importance in the investigation of isotopes. Its greatest use is in advertising signs.

(Next Month: The Romance of Platinum)

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Skeetch and Meetch perfected another of their machines. This one transferred dreams into reality. Then one day they found a customer who really had dreams!

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STUPORMAN

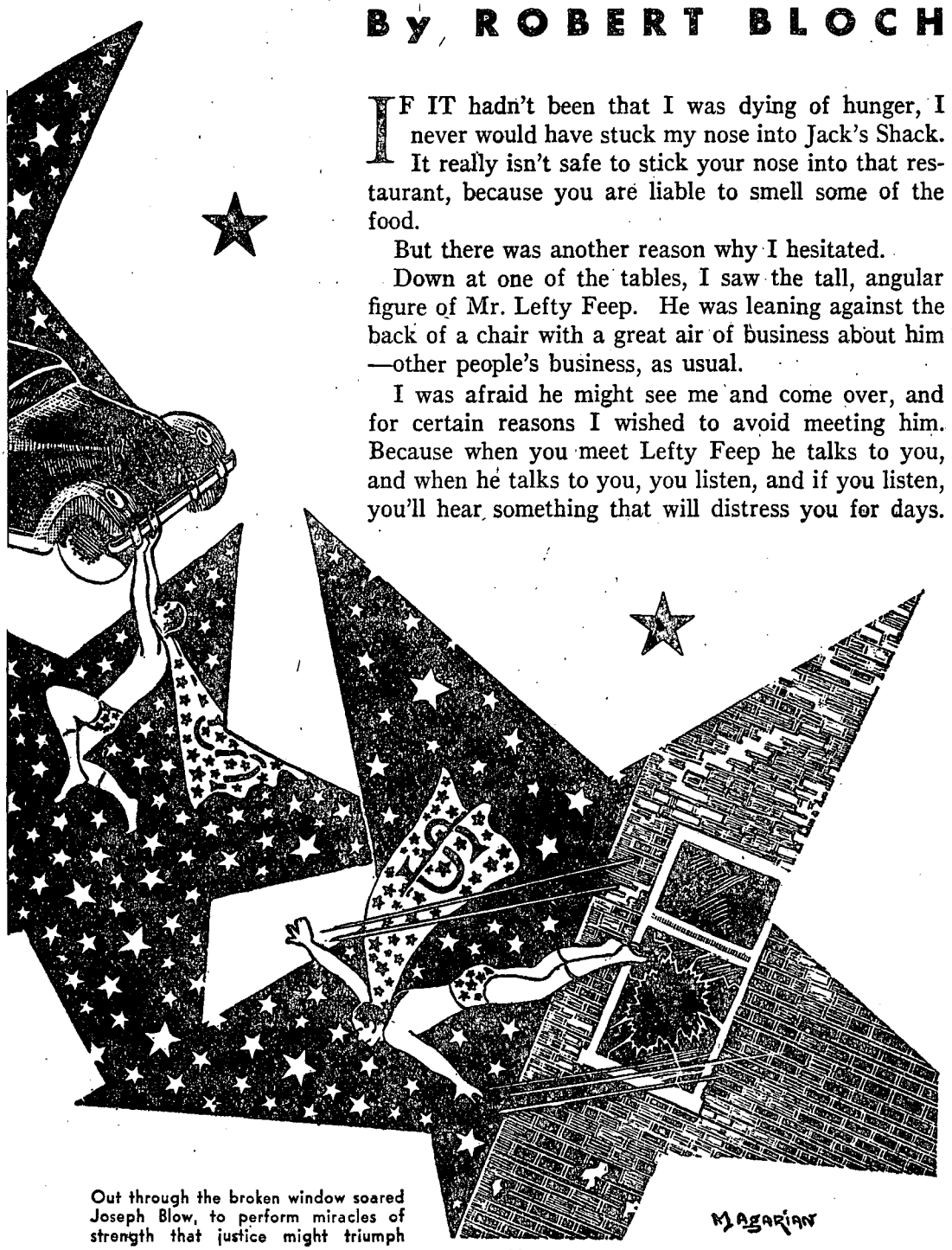
By ROBERT BLOCH

IF IT hadn't been that I was dying of hunger, I never would have stuck my nose into Jack's Shack. It really isn't safe to stick your nose into that restaurant, because you are liable to smell some of the food.

But there was another reason why I hesitated.

Down at one of the tables, I saw the tall, angular figure of Mr. Lefty Feep. He was leaning against the back of a chair with a great air of business about him —other people's business, as usual.

I was afraid he might see me and come over, and for certain reasons I wished to avoid meeting him. Because when you meet Lefty Feep he talks to you, and when he talks to you, you listen, and if you listen, you'll hear something that will distress you for days.



Out through the broken window soared Joseph Blow, to perform miracles of strength that justice might triumph

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However, I was pleased to see that Feep was already attached to a victim —a little thin man with eyeglasses and a nervous expression. He was talking to the small, bespectacled stranger quite earnestly, and the stranger was listening. I didn't recognize the fellow, but I felt sorry for him. It grieved me to see that he had a bandage around his head, but it grieved me more to see the way Feep was talking to him. I knew what suffering he was going through.

I tiptoed over to a table. Feep didn't look up. I called the waiter. Feep was still talking. I gave my order. Feep gabbled on. My food came, and I ate. Feep was rattling away.

I grinned. This was one time I'd get away scot-free. I laid a tip on the tablecloth and rose to go.

"Do not scurry in such a hurry."

The voice of Lefty Feep cut through my complacency. I looked up. The one-man crime wave against the English language was standing at my table. He sat down.

I sat down, too, when he pushed me into a chair.

"You must please believe that I grieve when I do not perceive you until you are about to leave," announced Feep, picking up a toothpick and signalling the waiter for a glass of water.

"I'm sorry, Lefty," I answered. "But I must be off."

"Never mind your mental condition," he smiled. "I want to talk to you."

"But I must go now."

"Kindly do not bring up biological problems," Feep insisted. "I see you are wearing your golf socks today."

I glanced down at my feet.

"Golf socks?" I echoed.

"Yes," said Feep. "The ones with the eighteen holes."

I rose again. "Listen, Lefty, I have no time to waste listening to your insults. Why don't you go over and bore that fellow you were talking to before?"

Feep caught my coat-tails and pulled me down again.

"You notice that personality?" he asked. "The little skinny guy with the goggles?"

"Of course I noticed him. Who is he?"

"Who is he?" gasped Feep. "You mean to inform me you do not recognize him?"

"No."

"Why, that is none other than Joe Blow."

"Joe Blow?"

"The famous Stuporman."

"Who in the world is Stuporman?" I asked.

"Why, I always figure everybody knows who Stuporman is," Feep sighed.

I shook my head.

"Well," said Feep, "I will tell his story, if you insist."

"I don't insist."

"You are just being polite," said Lefty Feep. "It is such a yarn as is not unravelled every day. Kindly lend me your ears and I will bend them for you."

He did.

With a lightning flick of his tongue, Lefty Feep began his tale.

* * *

WHEN I first hear of this personality, Joe Blow, he is a reporter on *The Daily Bulb*, a news-bladder. I see him hanging around Gorilla Gabface's pool palace oncely or twicely, and when I examine this specimen of manhood I am more depressed than impressed.

Joe Blow is a little insignificant jerk who is too weak to lick his own lips.

I hear from some of the downtown boys that he is not a very good reporter, and he is always having trouble. It

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seems Joe is very much in a fatuated condition over a beautiful girl reporter by the name of Effie Fink.

But Effie Fink does not yearn and burn for Joseph Blow. She thinks he is a sissy. First his draft board turns him down and then his girl friend turns him down. In fact, he gets turned down oftener than the lamp in the parlor of a sailor's girl-friend.

Joe Blow is also turned down around the mouth when I meet him on the street one day. He recognizes me from the pool hall and ambles over with a sad, un-glad smile.

"Hello, Joe," I greet him. "What's heating for eating? What, I inquire, is on the fire? In a word, what's cooking?"

"My goose," answers Joe Blow, very mournful.

"You have troubles?"

"Like Mussolini," sighs Joe. "I will live in a hotel for five years, and the manager rents my nice room to somebody else and gives me a bum room instead."

"Bum room? That's bad."

"I have worse," sighs Joe Blow. "My editor also gives me the bum's rush. On top of that, the other fellows at the paper are always picking on me. And to finish it all off, my girl friend, Effie Fink, is running around with a racketeer."

I sympathize with this little runt. "You must assert yourself," I tell him. "You must be impressive and aggressive."

"Just look at me," sobs Joe Blow. "I could not be more run-down if I would get hit by a truck."

"Why not take some vitamins?" I suggest.

Joe Blow shakes his head. "I am too weak to swallow them," he tells me. "Besides, they take too long to do any good. I must work fast to regain my girl-friend, also my self-respect."

"How about a muscle course?" I inquire.

He shakes his head again.

"I send in for one, but they do not mail me my muscles yet."

I try to console him. "We should be able to think of something. With my brains and your troubles—wait a minute! Brains—troubles—I know just the thing for you to do!"

"Commit suicide?" asks Joe hopefully.

"Not at all," I cackle. "We will go to see the psychologist, Subconscious Sigmund. Any time you need your wits sharpened, he is the guy to grind your mind."

"How can he help me?"

"He can psycho-analyze your condition. He can explain the pain in your brain."

"Let's go," says Joe Blow.

SO WE do. I steer him up to Subconscious Sigmund's office in the quickest kind of a hurry.

We walk inside and see Subconscious Sigmund talking on the telephone, but he nods for us to sit down and wait.

I gather that Sigmund is phoning a barber shop because his kid needs a haircut.

"Let me know when two barbers are free," he says, hanging up.

"Why does your kid need two barbers for a haircut?" I ask.

"The kid has two heads," says Subconscious Sigmund. "And now, what can I do for you?"

I point to Joe Blow and introduce him. "I wish you to tell me what is numb with his skull," I request.

So Sigmund takes Joe Blow into his private office and gives him the third degree. He pumps him for his life history. He grills him like a weenie.

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Joe Blow is soon pouring out all his troubles.

Subconscious Sigmund listens very carefully.

"Do you ever dream?" he asks.

"Of course I do."

"What about?"

"Oh, I don't know," says Joe Blow, kind of embarrassed. "I have very peculiar dreams. I dream that I am strong, powerful, dynamic. I can lift great weights and have remarkable endurance. I have the ability to see through walls, and hear any sound. And in some dreams I can even fly."

"Aha!" says Subconscious Sigmund.

"Also," says Joe Blow, blushing, "in some dreams I am always having dates with movie queens."

"Really," says Subconscious Sigmund. "You are strong, powerful, forceful, eh? And you have dates with movie queens."

"That's right," says Joe Blow. "Can you do anything to help me?"

"Sure," snaps Subconscious Sigmund. He fumbles around and hands Blow a little white box.

"What's this?" asks Blow.

"A box of sleeping tablets," grunts Subconscious Sigmund. "With dreams like that, what do you want to stay awake for?"

Joe Blow sighs, puts the box in his pocket, and plods downstairs. I follow him.

"Do not be discouraged," I remark, when we hit the street. "I have another idea that might help you."

"Nothing can help me."

"Rome wasn't burned in a day," I tell him. "We will try again. I think we ought to go over and see Skeetch and Meetch."

"Who?"

"Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch," I answer. "The famous scientific Americans. They run the *Horsecracker Institute*, and they are always inventing stuff in their laboratory, such as new ways to avoid paying the rent."

"Can they help me?"

"If anybody can, they are the personalities," I brag. "They are scientific, but terrific."

SO JOE BLOW trims his limbs over toward the *Horsecracker Institute*.

We climb the stairs to the big private laboratory where Skeetch and Meetch hang out, mostly around the elbows.

Little fat Skeetch and his chubby partner glare over their goggles in the outer office when we come in.

"Lefty Feep!" yells Skeetch. "It's a pleasure to see you! Sit down! Have a cigar? Good—then give it to me!"

"I want to read you my latest monograph," Meetch interrupts. "It is entitled 'AN APPREHENSION OF AN INTENTION FOR THE PREVENTION OF INVENTION' and it just won an Honorable Mention at the Convention."

"I haven't time," I tell them. "I only come here because I bring you a case."

"Open it up and I will get the glasses," says Skeetch.

"Not it—him," I correct, pointing at Joe Blow.

"What do you want us to do—bury him?" inquires Skeetch.

"No. I want you to listen to his story and help him."

So Joe Blow gives out with a pout about his fate. He tells about his bum room, his overbearing editor, his reporter friends that pick on him, and his girl friend who runs around with a racketeer. He mentions that he is weak and meek and the future looks bleak.

Skeetch and Meetch sigh and shake their heads.

I can see they don't know what to suggest.

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But Joe Blow goes on. He tells about seeing Subconscious Sigmund, and answering questions about his dreams. He mentions dreaming of flying and being strong and dynamic.

Suddenly both Skeetch and Meetch jump up and yell.

"We have it!" yells Meetch. "Eureka!"

"So do you," I snap.

"You come at the right moment," Skeetch babbles. "We are just looking for a subject to experiment on with our new machine."

"Machine? What do you mean?"

"The most keen machine you've ever seen!" raves Meetch. "We call it the *Morpheus Arm.*"

"Why?"

"Because it works while you sleep. It is a mechanical hypnotic device which translates the subconscious images of dreams into waking realities, utilizing subliminal concepts and energizing the psychic trauma until a vitalization occurs which impinges imaginative free-fantasies upon a framework of actuality, thus setting up a basis of positive activity actuated by the psyche."

"The hell you tell," I exclaim.

"What does he mean?" asks Joe Blow.

"Why it is simple," I inform him. "He means he invents a machine that turns your sleeping thoughts into waking realities. Whatever you imagine you can do while you dream, you actually can do."

"Right," says Meetch. "I couldn't explain it better myself. In fact, I couldn't explain it."

"But how does this machine operate?" persists Blow.

"Very simple arrangement," says Skeetch. "The subject goes to sleep. As he sleeps, electro-magnetic impulses, due to photo-electronic control are set up. The subject's heart action is synchronized to the movement of the machine. At the same time, a hypnotic force draws bodily magnetism from the sleeper as he dreams. The dreams, in a word, become a part of the machine—and the energy of the machine, operating in ratio with the dream image, flows into the body of the sleeper.

"When the sleeper wakes up, he has the ability and strength to carry out his dream activities. Simple?"

"You are simple," I tell him. "It sounds screwy to me."

"The machine is in our laboratory now," protests Meetch.

"I'd like to look at it, anyway," sighs Joe Blow. So we drag into the big laboratory.

SURE enough, there is this huge arm, attached to a big black cluster of wheels and wires, mounted on a heavy metal base set above an operating table.

"Looks like they've got something here," says Joe Blow.

"Yeah—something for the scrap drive," I sneer.

"I believe these gentlemen," says Joe Blow. "I think I would like to make the experiment. After all, what have I got to lose? I am down and out. But if I could be the way I am in my dreams —oh boy!"

"All you need to do is go to sleep," says Skeetch.

I shrug. If that is what Joe Blow wants, he will have it. But I cannot wait around for him to go to sleep.

Still, I am always glad to do a friend a favor.

So I walk behind Joe Blow and tap him over the head with a hammer.

He falls asleep at once.

Skeetch and Meetch lift him up on the table. He lies there under the laboratory lights, looking weaker and skin-

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nier and littler than ever.

Skeetch and Meetch go into their act. They indulge in a lot of wire-connecting, strap-buckling, switch-fiddling, button-pressing, and assorted dial-turning.

All at once the machinery begins to hum in various keys, like the Four Ink Spots. Then it gains a little power and begins to sing, off-key, like the Andrews Sisters.

Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch swings the big arm of the machine over until it hangs just above Joe Blow's head. The arm jiggles up and down. A little screen in back of the machine base lights up and long streaks of electricity crackle across it.

The pinball operators will pay real money for stuff like this, I figure.

But Skeetch and Meetch are more of the screwball operator type.

All at once Meetch utters a mutter.

"It isn't working right," he says. "We can't synchronize the heart action because the patient's pulse is too weak."

"Adrenalin," suggests Skeetch. He runs over to a glass cabinet and comes back with a hypodermic needle.

"Let's go," yells Meetch. "Shoot the harpoon to me, goon."

They give Joe Blow the needle.

The machine begins to groan and shake. So does Joe Blow. But in rhythm with the machine!

Now I notice the electric streaks on the screen also move in rhythm with Joe Blow's breathing. Everything is synchronized. And the arm above Joe Blow's head seems to be conducting energy from the machine into his body.

I sit there watching, and eating a banana, with rapt scientific curiosity. What will happen next? A short-circuit, I suspect.

But there is no explosion.

All at once the two geniuses rush over to Joe Blow and unstrap him. Meetch goes over to a wash stand and comes back with a glass of water which he throws in Joe Blow's face.

Joe Blow wakes up, sits up, gets up.

He is awake, and that is no fake.

I stare at him. He doesn't look any different as he climbs off the table.

IN BACK of him the machine grinds away, but that is the only evidence that anything happens during the last ten minutes. Except for that, it might all be a dream.

But if you ever see a dream walking, it is Joe Blow—as I soon discover.

"How do you feel?" I yell, above the machine's humming noise.

He smiles.

"Wonderful! Marvelous! Superb! Not so bad!" he announces.

Skeetch rushes up to him.

"It's a success," he gasps. "The machine works! Congratulations for helping our experiment."

He shakes hands with Joe Blow. Suddenly he starts to scowl and howl.

"Ouch!" yells Skeetch. "Leggo—you're breaking my fingers!"

Joe Blow lets go. He takes off his glasses and throws them away.

"Don't need these any more," he announces.

We look at him, wondering if it is true.

"My friend," says Meetch, "if you benefit from this machine, we are very happy. As long as it continues to operate you will be living your dreams. We will not shut it off. So if you are indeed stronger and more capable due to our efforts we are very pleased. We urge you to take full advantage of the machine's powers, so we can study the effects. In a word, make your dreams come true."

Joe Blow stands there. He is still a little, scrawny-looking guy, but he has

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a new smile on his face.

"Very well, gentlemen," he says. "Thank you for all your trouble. But if you will pardon me," he murmurs, "I must go now."

"Goodbye, Joe," I tell him.

"Goodbye," says Joe Blow, stepping over to the open window and flying away into the night.

Yes that is exactly what he does! He marches to the open window and hurls himself through the air like a rocket.

"For sobbing out loud!" I yell. "Look at that!"

Skeetch blinks, but Meetch winks.

"That's what he dreams about," he tells me. "With the aid of the machine he should be able to do that. He is almost walking—or rather, flying—in his sleep now. His brain is awake, but his soul is in a sort of a stupor."

"Stuporman," says Skeetch.

"Exactly," Meetch answers. "Joe Blow is now a Stuporman. As long as we keep our machine running, he can do whatever his imagination will allow."

Skeetch rubs his hands. "Well, that's that," he says. "We will let the machine run a while and see what happens to our subject in this little experiment. But now we must go back to work. What is next on our program, Meetch?"

Meetch looks at his list.

"We are supposed to build a rocketship," he announces.

"All right," says Skeetch. "I suppose it will take us several days, at least. You had better go now, Lefty."

So I take my leave of Skeetch and Meetch, wondering all the while what Joe Blow does after he flies off into the night.

I do not find out until a long time afterwards. But this is the way it works out.

Joe Blow is very delighted to find he can fly. He glides along over the rooftops, hoping an Army patrol doesn't spot him, and practices gliding and swooping and dipping, and maybe a little peeking into second-story windows.

BUT after a while the novelty wears off and Joe Blow realizes he has a job to do.

So he heads over to his hotel. He lights down in the alley in back and walks in very normally. He prances up to the desk, where the manager is sitting—a fat, tough-looking number.

"Pardon me," he coughs, looking meek.

"Why should I?" growls the manager, looking up. He is the fellow who imposes on Joe Blow by kicking him out of his good room and putting him in a cubbyhole a few days before.

"I should like to have my old room back," Blow remarks.

The manager glares. "I already tell you it is quite impossible. That room is rented to somebody else now."

"But it has a nice southern exposure," argues Joe Blow. "I lived in it for five years and like it. Now you transfer me to a little closet with no windows at all. What can I do for air?"

"You can get the hell out of here," suggests the manager. "I have no time to waste arguing with an insignificant little pip-squeak like you."

Joe Blow shrugs. "No southern exposure?" he mumbles. "All right. Suit yourself."

He walks out of the hotel. The manager laughs.

But a minute later, the manager is not laughing. He is shaking. In fact, the whole building is shaking.

The shaking turns to a terrific shudder. Then there is a rumble, a totter,

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the building seems to lift in the air, and everything whirls around.

When the manager opens his eyes again, everything is quiet. And normal.

He rushes to the door and looks outside to see about the earthquake.

He looks around and almost collapses.

"I'm on the wrong street!" he whispers.

The explanation, of course, is simple. Joe Blow wants a room with southern exposure. So he merely goes outside and lifts up the building and turns it around until his room faces south.

Then he puts it back down, punches a hole through the wall of his room for a window, and flies away.

"This Stuporman business is all right," he thinks to himself, lighting on the pavement across from his newspaper office.

He starts to cross the street.

A car whizzes around the corner, almost clipping him. A tough but gruff voice sings out, "Whyn'cha look where youse is going, huh? Wanna hold up traffic?"

Ordinarily, Joe Blow cringes when somebody yells at him. But now he yells right back.

"Yes, I do want to hold up traffic," he says.

And he scoops up the car in his arms and holds it up. He puts it down out of his way, and crosses the street.

The tough but gruff guy is now sick but quick.

JOE BLOW ignores him and marches into the newspaper office. He heads straight for the back where the editor hangs out.

Usually he does not dare to invade his privacy, but today he walks right into the inner office and sits down.

The editor looks up.

"So here you are, eh, Blow? What the hell's been keeping you?" he snarls.

"It's my day off."

"Day off? Day off? You just have a day off last week when your appendix busts."

"I know, but—"

"Listen, Blow," snarls the editor. "While you are taking your day off, stories are breaking all over town. I get a report about some nut who is flying over the city. Do you phone me in the yarn? No!"

"I can explain—"

"Shuddup! Then the manager of the hotel down the street phones in about an earthquake. It picks up his hotel and turns it around on its foundations. Do you cover this story? No!"

"But listen, sir—"

"You know what I'm gonna do, Blow?" yells the editor, getting up and grabbing Blow by the scruff of his neck. "I'm gonna kick you out."

And he aims a very hearty kick indeed at Joe Blow's stomach while his back is turned.

"Ouch!" moans the editor, hopping around and grabbing his foot. "What you got—lead in your pants?"

Joe Blow pushes the editor back into a chair and smiles.

"Now *you* listen to *me*," he says.

The editor sits back very quiet. He is so quiet you can hear his eyes popping when Joe Blow exhibits his new personality as Stuporman.

"I am sick and tired of your bossing," says Blow. "For ten years I work here on the *Daily Bulb* without a raise. I think it is about time you double my salary."

"What the—"

"Sit down!" snaps Blow. "I am not afraid of you any more, you big yard of lard. You are not as tough as you look. For a while I think you are all muscle, but now I know your secret.

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Do I get the raise, or do I tell all the reporters you wear a corset?"

"Corset?" screams the editor. "How do you know—are you the devil?"

"No," says Joe Blow. "But my super-vision tells me that beneath your vest is a corset."

The editor blushes. He shakes his head violently.

"Don't be upset," Blow adds. "Your wig will slide off."

The editor gulps.

"We all know you wear a wig," Blow tells him. "Matter of fact, my super-hearing tells me that some of the reporters in the outer office are talking about it right now. They are wondering if you ever find any eggs in that bird-nest you have on your head."

The editor, after screaming, blushing, and gulping, is too tired to do anything. He just sits there.

"Where do you get your wonderful hearing and vision?" he inquires. "To say nothing of whatever you have when I try to kick you?"

"Never mind," Joe Blow cracks. "From now on I will not be taking kicks any more, I will be giving them out. And you are always at the top of my list."

Blow grins. "Yes sir," he says. "I have a deep-seated affection for you and—"

JUST then the door opens and Blow's super-vision and super-hearing get a real workout. For into the room steps his girl-friend, Effie Fink. This damsel is really quite an eyeful and quite high-spirited. In fact she is all curves and nerves.

Joe Blow's mouth hangs open and he forgets all about his abilities as Stuporman.

Effie Fink ignores him and prances up to the editor.

"I think I'm on the trail of that subway graft," she announces. "The *Daily Bulb* will have a scoop tomorrow if your little girl reporter knows anything about it."

"Fine," says the editor. "We ought to uncover this affair. We must find out what's holding up the subway construction."

"I'm following a hot lead," says Effie. "Hope I don't get my nose burned."

Joe Blow sits there gulping and hoping Effie Fink will notice him, but she doesn't.

"Ah—uh—hello, Effie," he yammers.

Effie turns and gives him a look straight from the Deep-Freeze.

"Oh, it's you," she remarks.

"Sure," says Joe. "Don't you notice me when you come in?"

"No," answers the girl reporter. "And I still don't."

"Uh—how about going out with me this evening?"

Effie laughs.

"I'm sorry, but I already have an engagement, thank heaven! I am the guest of Mr. Cutter."

"You mean 'Throats' Cutter, the racketeer?" gasps Joe.

"Never mind the vulgar nicknames. Mr. Cutter is a gentleman, as far as I know, and I will thank you not to cast any aspersions on him."

"I would like to cast something more then aspersions on that big baboon!" mutters Blow.

The damsel laughs. "You? Why you haven't strength enough to cast a vote," she titters. "But I cannot waste time. I'm on my way."

Effie Fink breezes, banging the door shut behind her.

The editor looks at Joe Blow sitting there and trying to pick his face up from the floor when it starts falling.

"Huh!" grunts the editor. "You and your super-vision and super-hearing

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and super-strength! Why don't you assert yourself with her, you super-chump?"

Joe Blow shakes his head. "You don't understand," he says. "When I see Effie I don't think about myself any more. I forget everything. I worship the ground her open-toed shoes toddle on! Besides, I don't want her to know about my power. I want her to love me for myself."

The editor has a slight change of heart. "Don't feel so bad, Joe," he advises. "I happen to know she really doesn't like this 'Throats' Cutter she hangs around with lately. It is merely that she suspects him of being mixed up in this graft to halt construction on the subway. She goes out with him to pump him, try to uncover the deal, and get a story for the paper."

Joe Blow perks up a little when he hears this. "I see," he exclaims. "It's strictly business."

"Exactly. And this subway scandal is important."

"Right," says Joe Blow. "Today I happen to be visiting my scientific friends, Skeetch and Meetch," he observes, proudly. "I notice that when the subway is completed it will end very close to their *Horsecracker Institute.*"

The editor makes a suggestion. "Why don't you get on this story too?" he asks. "The sooner we find out about the subway, the sooner Effie Fink is through with 'Throats' Cutter."

JOE BLOW is so excited he forgets about his super-strength. He springs to his feet and bumps his head against the ceiling. He comes down gracefully, along with a shower of plaster.

"I'll do it," he shouts. "I'll follow her."

"Probably she is at his apartment," suggests the editor.

"In that racketeer's apartment? I must be off," yells Blow.

He runs to the open window.

Blow blows.

The editor watches him dive out.

"Yes, he must be off," he sighs.

But Joe Blow, flying through the night, is very much on. He swoops down at a corner drugstore and rockets into a phone booth. Every ounce of his new super-energy is quivering with excitement. He calls the *Horsecracker Institute,* meanwhile tearing the telephone book in half just for practice.

"Hello," he yells, when Skeetch answers the phone. "This is Joe Blow. Have you still got the *Morpheus Arm* working? Good! Be sure to keep it on. I'll need everything I've got tonight."

He hangs up, whirls through the drugstore, and takes off from the curb.

A cop sees him flying into the night.

"Hey, you!" he hollers. "Why don't you wait until the lights change?"

But Joe Blow is already a mile up, zooming for the big apartment where "Throats" Cutter hangs his coat and gat.

In a moment he is perched on the window ledge outside the 19th floor, using his super-vision to squint through into the rooms beyond.

There is Effie Fink, sitting on the sofa with "Throats" Cutter. Joe Blow looks at the celebrated racketeer and shudders.

"Throats" Cutter is only about five feet six and weighs about 150 pounds, but he is every inch a thoroughbred. A thoroughbred rat. Even if his height and weight are only average, he looks very strong. His arms bulge with muscles and his hip-pockets bulge with hardware. He is sitting with his legs crossed, and Joe Blow can see a stiletto parked in his left stocking. He has his coat off and is relaxing in a bullet-proof

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vest, but his tie is neatly knotted to hide the blackjack hanging underneath it. "Throats" Cutter is smoothing back his coal-black hair with his left hand, because his right hand is covered with brass knuckles.

Effie Fink doesn't seem to notice this one-man arsenal's appearance. She is giving him the old oil.

"It must be marvelous to be so important," she sighs. "And have so many people interested in you."

"I get shot at every day," says Cutter, proudly.

"You must be very busy," whispers the damsel. "I hear you are interested in the new subway."

"Who tells you that?" snaps Cutter, his eyes glittering like the teeth on a hungry shark.

"Oh, a little birdie."

"A little dead birdie, if I ever catch him," mutters Cutter.

"But isn't it true?" needles the girl reporter.

"Don't bother your head about such things and you'll keep it longer," says Cutter. "Wait a minute. I'll mix us up a drink and we'll get sociable."

He gets up and walks out very slow, because of all the hardware weighing him down.

EFFIE FINK doesn't waste any time. The minute he leaves the room she runs to the desk, trying the drawers. They are locked. Then she runs over to the wall safe and fiddles with it. It doesn't open.

Finally she sees a closet door and opens it.

In the closet hangs three overcoats, two suits, and a large man with a bandage in his mouth.

"Eeeeek!" remarks Effie Fink.

She turns around. "Throats" Cutter stands in the doorway of the parlor, watching her.

"Do not be alarmed," he says, smiling. "He is doing all right hanging there in the closet. I have insect spray in there so the moths won't get him."

"But I know him," the girl reporter blurts. "That's Ambrose Reed, the contractor who is building the subway."

"Not any more," grins Cutter. "From now on I am building the subway."

"You kidnap him?" whispers the girl.

Cutter doesn't grin any more.

"It is too bad you open that door," he says. "Because I do not like for people to discover the skeletons in my closet. Even big fat skeletons like this Ambrose Reed."

"What are you going to do?" asks Effie Fink.

"I am going to tell you everything," Cutter answers. "Yes, I kidnap Ambrose Reed last week. I take over the contracting job and stir up trouble with the men so the work slows down. Because the longer it takes to build the subway, the more it costs. And the more it costs, the more I will make. Understand?"

"Yes." Effie frowns. "But why do you admit all this to me?"

Cutter laughs. "So you will have a good story to put in the paper tomorrow, of course," he answers.

"You mean I can print it?"

Cutter shrugs. "Well—maybe not. I think I've got a better story figured out. With a little female interest in it, see? How does this sound? 'BEAUTIFUL GIRL REPORTER FOUND DEAD IN SUBWAY. IDENTITY UNKNOWN, BUT SEARCHERS ARE CONFIDENT OF FINDING MORE BITS SHORTLY AND PUTTING THEM TOGETHER.' There's a real story, eh?"

It is a trifle difficult for Effie to answer this question, because she is now hanging upside down over Cutter's

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shoulder as he grabs her up and smothers her mouth with his hand.

He heads for the door and dashes out of the apartment by a rear elevator.

Joe Blow, meanwhile, is very busy on his own hook.

Naturally, he wants to save Effie Fink from death.

But once a reporter, always a reporter. There is a big news story here, and he must get a scoop.

So as soon as Cutter and the damsel leave the room, he springs through the window and unties Mr. Ambrose Reed.

In a flash he whips out a pencil and notebook and gets the story of his untimely snatching from the kidnaped contractor.

Then Stuporman's strength comes into play. He rips open the desk drawers and tears the safe door from the wall. He scoops out all the documents about the subway contracts.

In a twinkling he calls the editor of the *Daily Bulb* and delivers his lead story.

"Reed says this delay will hold up the subway six months," he says. "Yes, Reed's safe, with me. Effie Fink? Oh, Effie Fink is with Cutter at the subway. He's going to blow her to bits or something. What? I should save her? Not a bad idea."

JOE BLOW, the Stuporman, hangs up, waves goodbye to Ambrose Reed, and jumps out of the window.

"Dammit!" he yells, outside. "I should have enough sense to open the window before I jump."

But there is no time for quibbling. Joe Blow therefore, does not quibble. He flies. He heads for the dark, yawning mouth of the unfinished subway tunnel.

He swoops down into the black pit and skims along through darkness.

Far ahead a light gleams along the tracks.

In the glow, Joe Blow can see a sight that has not been his privilege to witness since the days of the silent movies.

Effie Fink is lying on the subway rails in the tunnel way beyond. She is tied hand and foot, and looks very uncomfortable.

Coming towards her is a big electric hand-car, whizzing along the rails. On the hand-car is a large keg of TNT, with the fuse sputtering away and burning down.

When it hits Effie Fink in a second or two, there will be a difficult time finding enough left of her to please a jigsaw puzzle fan.

This situation alarms Effie quite a bit, and she is uttering loud cries of displeasure.

Way down the tracks stands "Throats" Cutter, and he does not agree with Effie Fink's complaints. He is laughing in a jolly fashion—a jolly fashion for a hyena, that is.

Joe Blow, *alias* Stuporman, takes in this situation with a single super-vision.

In one second the TNT and the handcar will strike Effie Fink.

He hurls himself forward.

Fast as he is, he is still a hundred feet away.

Too late!

Mustering up every ounce of his strength, Stuporman opens his mouth, takes careful aim at the dynamite keg a hundred feet away—and spits the fuse out!

It sputters and dies, but the handcar rolls.

Stuporman waits until it actually touches Effie Fink—so that the wheels cut the ropes tying her, and that saves him the trouble.

Then he zooms down and pushes the car back up the track. He gives it a

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powerful shove and it begins to rocket back towards "Throats" Cutter. Cutter can't run away. He fumbles in the darkness of the tunnel and whirls around as the hand-car approaches with Stuporman sitting on it.

Joe Blow sees what Cutter has in his hands.

A big, black-barreled sub-machine gun.

And it is aimed at him.

Stuporman or no Stuporman, he doesn't think he can stop bullets.

So as Cutter shoots, Stuporman Blow leaps up, comes down on the barrel of the gun, and bends it backwards while Cutter is firing it.

The bullets enter Mr. Cutter very rapidly, and he becomes very dead.

Effie Fink comes running up, after taking all this time to pull up her stockings and put on fresh make-up.

"Oh, Joe, you're wonderful!" she whispers. "You will be a hero for saving the subway."

Joe Blow, the Stuporman, frowns.

"The subway!" he mutters. "That's right. I know I forget something."

"What is it, darling?" asks Effie Fink.

"Get out of here," orders the new Joe Blow. "I've got work to do."

MEEKLY, Effie Fink walks up the tunnel and out of the unfinished subway at the nearest exit.

Joe Blow turns to the wall of earth beyond.

He glances at his wristwatch and sighs.

"Gosh! It's almost midnight. Well, that leaves me a couple of hours, anyway."

So taking off his coat, Stuporman gets to work and finishes building the subway before morning!

Yes, all night long he tunnels and digs, and hauls and props and scoops and cements and pushes through under the streets.

By six a.m. he is dizzier than a cross-eyed octopus in a Hall of Mirrors.

Even Stuporman gets tired.

And that, of course, must be why he gets so confused and makes a mistake. His super-vision is reading blue prints while his super-strength is burrowing through the cement to build the terminal station.

Right then and there he goes wrong.

He digs a little too far and a little off-side.

As a matter of fact, he comes up in the basement of a building. The building above him is shaking and he hears familiar voices cursing away.

"What's the matter?" he croaks hoarsely. "What's happening? Why do I feel so weak?"

After starting this quiz program with himself, Joe Blow takes one look around him, gulps, and falls flat on his face.

When he wakes up he stares into the goggled eyes of Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch.

"Why do you do it?" moans Meetch.

"Do what?" Joe Blow moans back at him.

"Dig up under our cellar and shake the building," Skeetch answers. "When you do that you cause the *Morpheus Arm* to jiggle. It stops cold. Something goes wrong and it will not work any more!"

"You mean I wreck the machinery that controls my dreams come true?" sighs Joe Blow. "I am not Stuporman any more?"

"No more," says Skeetch.

"But you are a hero in today's papers," Meetch consoles him.

Joe Blow gets up weakly.

"It's all over, I guess. Now I am just Joe Blow the reporter again. Effie Fink will not go for me now that I lose my superstrength."

"Wait a minute," Meetch suggested.

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"Nobody needs to know you aren't Stuporman any more. Don't tell her. She will never catch on. Go to her now. I bet she will be your slave for life."

Joe Blow takes this suggestion, nods, and beams. He walks out in the early morning sunshine with a smile on his face.

And sure enough, when he gets back to the office, Effie Fink falls all over him. The editor is proud, the subway contractor is overjoyed, and Joe Blow —the famous Stuporman—is a hero.

LEFTY FEEP finished wagging his tale and sat back.

I nodded.

"So that's how subways are built," I said, a little sarcastically.

"Joe Blow tells me all about it himself just now," Feep answered. "You do not think he is a prevaricator, do you? And certainly you know that *I* am 100% truthful."

"You're better than that," I told Feep. "Sometimes you're 200% at least."

He smiled at the compliment.

I turned to stare at skinny little bespectacled Joe Blow.

"Seems hard to believe that such a runt could do so many wonderful things," I sighed.

"You can see the subway for yourself. Doesn't that prove it?" Feep told me.

"I suppose so," I admitted. "But by the way, I forgot to ask you a question."

"Let's have it," said Lefty Feep.

"Why is your Stuporman friend wearing a bandage around his head?"

"Oh, that?"

Feep smiled as he replied.

"It seems he marries this girl Effie Fink, and she beats the hell out of him."

THE END

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 8)

certain red scale insects to drastic control measures used by citrus growers.

When exposed to cyanide gas these citrus pests close two pair of holes, called spiracles, through which air enters their body. They can keep these holes closed for at least thirty minutes, time enough for at least twenty per cent of the insects to escape death. Since practical control requires the killing of 98 to 99 per cent, cyanide fumigation is useless for complete control of resistant red scales. Petroleum oil sprays will control the red scales, but are much more expensive and are harmful to the trees.

Non-resistant scales can keep their spiracles closed for only about one minute, after which the holes open and the lethal gas enters their bodies.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent annually to control red scale. Since 1922 the resistant type has been spreading over larger areas every year. At the present time, scientists are attempting to find some substance which can be combined with cyanide to force the resistant scales to open their spiracles, thereby allowing the gas to enter their bodies.

DO YOU get bored when you gargle because you must improvise without benefit of rhyme and meter? If so, your prayers are answered—for snuggled in the town of Webster, Massachusetts, not far from the Connecticut line is none other than Lake Chargoggagoggmonchauggagoggchaubunagungamaug! You don't pronounce it—you gargle it. It's the longest lake in the world, although its area is only two square miles.

It happens that three Algonquin tribes lived around this lake, and they were quarreling continually over who had the right to fish in the middle. Finally, they drew up a treaty providing exclusive fishing rights for each tribe in its own part of the lake, and they named the lake after the terms of the treaty. "You fish on your side; we fish on our side; nobody fish in the middle." Many reference works abbreviate the name to Chaubunagungamaug, but the good people of Webster, Massachusetts, for some strange reason, are satisfied to call it Lake Chaug.

ALL of us have read of tribes and cults in Asia and Africa that practiced self-torture, but none of these self-cruelties are any worse than those committed by the Penitentes or Penitent Brothers.

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They were all fanatic Mexicans bound together in a common brotherhood that was active only during the forty days of Lent. During this period they lashed their backs with whips made of fiber, bore huge crosses on their backs, lay on beds of cactus, and performed all kinds of tortures upon themselves.

The grand finale came on Good Friday when the self-tortures were carried to the greatest extremes and the ceremony was ended by the crucification on a real cross of one of their group who was chosen by a grand lottery.

The Penitentes were once very numerous in New Mexico, but due to the efforts of the church they have been stamped out so that only a few scattered bands now exist.

DO YOU know the truth about shooting stars? Are they really stars?

The shooting and falling stars are not stars at all, in fact. They are meteorites—comparatively small masses of rock or iron flying about in space. Their origin is unknown.

According to the most usual scientific explanation, meteorites are visible only when they come into contact with the upper atmosphere of the earth. The streak of light, it is supposed, is caused by the enormous heat generated by friction. Usually the meteorite is heated red hot, bursts into flame, and is reduced to dust before it reaches the ground.

Some scientists, however, regard this explanation as inadequate. Pietri Burgatto, an Italian physicist, advanced the theory that part of the light at least is caused by the electricity developed by friction between the meteorite and the highly electried upper atmosphere.

The light produced by one of these molten masses is often called a *fireball.*

AMERICA is invaded! No, don't get excited —we haven't been attacked by the Japs or Nazis on United States soil, but we have been invaded by a pest that is attacking our farm output. The marauder is a beetle that originally came from Mexico, probably during the Mexican War, and according to the Smithsonian Institution Report it lives only on legumes which is the family of plants consisting of beans, peas, clover, and alfalfa. These crops, however, are very important ones to the American farmer and so Mr. Mexican bean beetle is placed high on the farm pest list.

When the bean beetle first arrived in the Southwest nothing much was heard about it and it didn't thrive very well on this sparsely settled and uncultivated region. However, after World War 1, the beetle put in its appearance in Alabama, having gone there in the many shipments of alfalfa from the Southwest. Here the beetle found the ideal home since it was moister and warmer and it multiplied rapidly. Not only did it multiply but it spread out all over the Southeast by flying and then laying eggs wherever it stopped to rest. By 1932, even states east of the Mississippi, except Wisconsin and Florida, reported that the Mexican bean beetle had moved in. Now with the bean crop even more important than ever, steps are being taken to bring the pest under control.

ONE often wonders about the special powers with which the man who walks on burning coals is endowed. Many may have thought that the soles of his feet were toughened enabling him to perform this feat. Others who believed in prayer may have thought that the man's prayers said previous to his journey across the red hot coals relieved him from suffering.

The truth behind this so-called magic follows: After the coals are lit and begin to burn with a red hot glow, our performer will have someone examine the soles of his feet just to show that they are bare. He then kneels to say a prayer so that the Almighty will protect him from a burning death. Now then the secret. The ground near the cushion on which he kneels to say his prayers is coated with a mixture of two chemicals —potassium and aluminum. This mixture adheres to the soles of his feet and has the property of preventing the coals from burning at the point where his feet touch the coals. Try it sometime.

ONE of the shipyards of the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company has solved the rubber tire shortage in their own way. They are replacing the tires on their trailers with wooden tires made out of twelve sections of hard maple. The blocks are soaked in linseed oil for one day and night and then are fitted together to form a covering for the trailer rims. The trailers, drawn by tractors, are used to haul ship propellers weighing 20 tons about the shipyard, yet the management claims the wooden tires can carry loads of 50 tons with ease.

Each wooden tire replaces a rubber tire that weights 100 pounds and since the shipyards are essential industries these rubber tires would have to be supplied. Thus it was not a case of necessity but down-right patriotism that inspired the adoption of these wooden tires. They are expected to last from one to two years and if the sections are boiled in paraffin before they are put together, they may even last longer. The company has surely challenged every other company to see if they can't find just one more way to help out.

WHICH brings us to the end for this month, readers. And as we close, we have a proof of the cover on our desk. Sure is a beauty isn't it? Well, take it easy on the spending, take it hard on the war effort, and you boys in the service, take *everything* out with interest on the Japs and Nazis. And we hope you enjoy the issue!

Rap.

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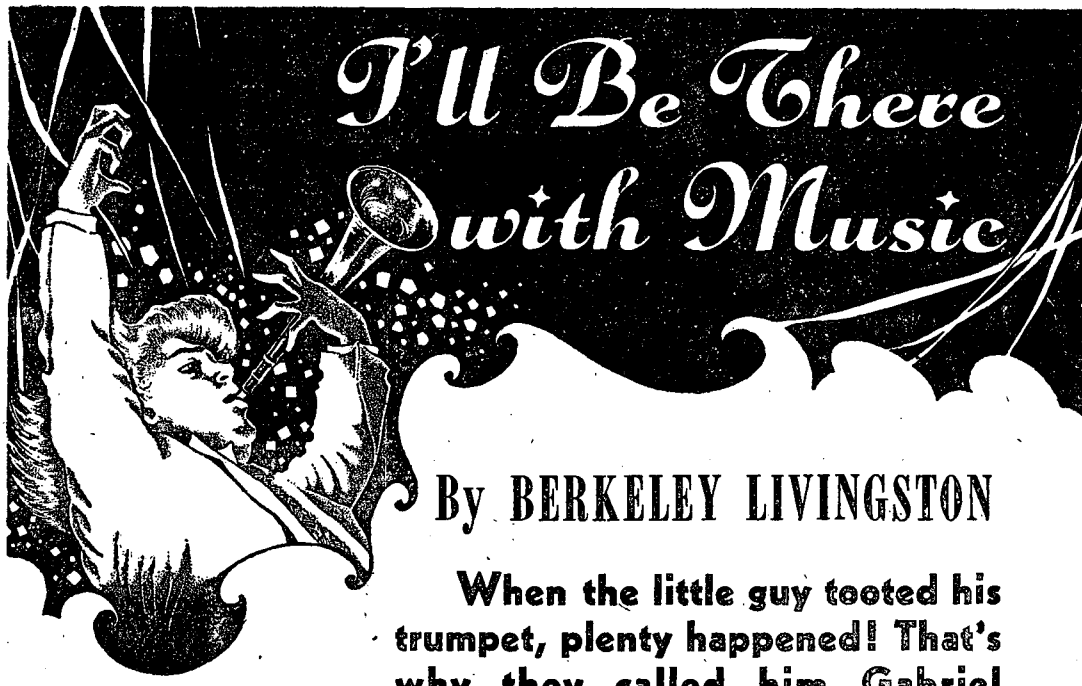

By BERKELEY LIVINGSTON

When the little guy tooted his trumpet, plenty happened! That's why they called him Gabriel

WILLIE THE WEEP was angry. After a hard day's work of "faking a gimp," he had made only enough for a pint of his favorite rotgut. Arriving at Moe's Mansion, the flophouse he called home —rates, twenty-five and thirty-five cents—he went up to 205—his room.

But when he opened the door he saw the bed was already occupied. So! It had come to this! Well, he'd tell Moe a thing or two. . . .!

Moe looked at the mottled, thirty-years-with-the-whiskey face of Willie the Weep and knew something was wrong. Of course, Willie's voice helped too.

"A fine thing," Willie said, his voice hoarse with indignation; "here I am, the best 'gimper' in town, comin' in for my night's flop, and what do I find? Some other 'bo in my room!" His voice dropped dramatically. "In *my* room!"

Here, Willie reverted to character. Tears began to course down the well-worn channels of dirt on his cheeks. His voice fell off into a tearful whine.

"I ask you, Moe," Willie wept, "is that the way to treat me? Me, one of your best customers. Did I ever take one of your two-bit rooms? No. I always got the best; a thirty-five-center! So what do you do? You give it to some stranger; some guy you'll never see again. How could you do this to me, Moe? When you know that since I've had 205, I've always been lucky?"

Willie heaved a lugubrious sigh. The record had come to a tearful end.

A look of pain crossed the fat-heavy face of Moe Maybrick, owner of Moe's Mansion. Another complaint. Ever since he had made his flophouse a two-priced affair, nothing but trouble had crossed the threshold. It was then Moe discovered that opera stars and baseball players were not the only ones with temperament. The occupants of

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Jane, dressed as a flower girl, was ready for her song

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Moe's Mansion also had it.

For those bums who had thirty-five cents for a night's flop, looked down their noses at the less fortunate ones who had to content themselves with a two-bit room. It was all very aggravating. Especially when the only difference between rooms was that the higher priced one had a chair.

"All right, Willie," said Moe, as he came out from the beaver-board affair which served as his office, "let's go up and take a look. I can't understand it, because I didn't give your room to anyone else. But we'll see."

Willie was right, though. For there on his bed lay the completely clothed figure of a man.

"Look," Willie yelped indignantly, "he's a two-bitter! He sleeps with his clothes on!"

"Shut up," Moe growled, "I don't know how or when this stiff got in, but he's going out—after I collect thirty-five cents."

With that Moe reached out and grabbing a generous portion of the stranger's jacket, yelled, "Hey you—wake up!"

The stranger stirred, sighed and at last opened gentle blue eyes to stare up into Moe's face. As though not satisfied with what he found there he subjected Moe to a thorough inspection, his eyes at last coming to rest on Moe's tiny feet. He then did a repeat performance with Willie.

"Well," asked Moe, "satisfied?"

"Ah," sighed the stranger. And after a few seconds silence, a silence which also embraced Moe and Willie he sighed again.

Willie and Moe noticed that the second "ah" had a strange note of satisfaction in it.

NOW that the stranger was awake, Moe was all business, although he knew it was a pretty hopeless cause. Experience had taught him that once a bum slipped by the desk and into a room, there was very little chance of collecting.

"All right, 'bo," Moe growled, "get up off that flop and reach into your kick. I'll take thirty-five."

The stranger lost no time in getting off the bed. Moe and Willie were quick to observe that, for a bum, he was rather well dressed. A suit of dark material fitted the small, plump frame neatly. The white shirt he wore was spotless. And his fresh-colored, apple-cheeked face, topped by a head of snow white hair, looked as clean and scrubbed as though it had just been washed.

"Ah!" said the stranger again, smiling a white-toothed smile.

Moe was getting a little tired of this "ah" business. Maybe that was the only word the little guy knew. But Moe wanted room rent. So he tried again: "Look, buddy, let's not go into that again. All I want is my money. And then, just for the record, you can tell me how you got in here."

While Moe was giving his collection speech, the smile had gradually left the plump little man's face. A worried frown creased his forehead. Turning his back to Moe and Willie he carefully looked over the room.

"Hm," he said in a low voice, "now where could it be?"

"Where could what be?" asked Moe.

The stranger evidently hadn't heard him, for he had walked over to the chair beside the bed and looked between its legs. Then he lowered himself to his knees and peered beneath the bed. Not satisfied with that, he crawled under it!

Willie the Weep and Moe looked at each other, consternation in their eyes. Willie's right hand went up in the di-

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rection of his forehead and made a slow circling gesture.

"The guy's nuts," Willie whispered.

"You're right," Moe agreed.

They both turned again to face the bed from under which they could hear scuffling sounds. The cherubic face of the stranger regarded them intently and a gentle smile parted his lips. "It wasn't there," the little man announced matter-of-factly. He came out from under the bed and carefully brushed his clothing.

Moe was getting desperate. He had to get down to the office. God alone knew how many bums had found free lodging for the night since he had come up here.

"Look, Mister," Moe said, his hands wide in a gesture of friendship, "maybe you didn't leave it here. Maybe you left it at the last place you were in."

"Oh, dear, I hope not." Consternation made the stranger's voice go up an octave.

Suddenly an explosive "ah" burst from the little man's lips. He had remembered at last! Moving purposefully to the bed, he reached under the pillow and pulled out a trumpet!

Triumphantly he showed it to Moe and Willie. Elation was bright in his voice as he said, "I knew it was here, somewhere."

Then, while the two spectators to his treasure hunt stood in open-mouthed bewilderment he tucked the trumpet under his arm and walked past them through the open door. They could hear his voice fading off down the staircase:

"I knew it was there, somewhere!"

HARRY the Hock, a song in his heart, and larceny on his mind, was well pleased with himself as he sauntered down the street. Harry was a pawnbroker. A pawnbroker is a man to whom you give your all in exchange for a little ticket, usually worth five dollars, which says you may have your articles back—if you can pay one hundred per cent interest on the loan.

Harry had been playing his favorite role that afternoon. That of being a benefactor to someone who needed money. Harry was talking to himself.

"Now let's see," he ruminated, "the diamond weighed a carat and a half. Of course, it was an old fashioned setting. Still I should get seven hundred for it. Oh, well, so I gave the guy a break. I gave him seventy-five dollars! Hm, that'll only be a profit of six hundred and twenty-five dollars. Maybe he would have taken fifty?"

So wrapped in his thoughts was he, that he failed to see the plump little man, with a trumpet under his arm, emerge from the entrance to Moe's Mansion.

Their meeting was on the informal side. To the casual bystander, it looked like the six foot tall pawnbroker had attempted assault on a much smaller opponent.

The little man rebounded from Harry, his hands wildly swinging around in search of someone or something to grab hold of. The trumpet fell to the sidewalk. Something about the sound of metal striking the walk made Harry stop short. Or perhaps it was the mellow, yellow gleam of its metal in the early evening sunlight, which got his eye. At any rate he reached the trumpet first. When he straightened up, the little man was at his side.

"Here you are, sir," Harry said, returning the trumpet. "Ain't hurt a bit."

"Thank goodness," gasped the little man. "I was so afraid that it was. And I must play for some people, tonight."

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Harry had appraised the weight of the instrument, when he picked it up.

"Solid gold," was his thought, "and this old duck was just coming out of a flophouse. Maybe I can swing a little deal."

Aloud, Harry said, "Nice horn you got there."

Then, in a more hesitant manner, as though he were just one music lover addressing another:

"But a little old-fashioned, ain't it?"

The gleam in Harry's eyes, however, was not from musical appreciation.

But Harry had hit the right note.

The little stranger's eyes lit up proudly.

"My dear sir," he said, "this is the only horn of its kind in the world."

"A family heirloom, hunh?" asked Harry.

"I should say!" replied the other. "It has been in my keeping for many years. I would be lost without it."

"Maybe you want to sell it?" Harry asked slyly.

The little stranger made the mistake of waiting too long to answer.

It gave Harry the Hock a chance to go into action. It was Harry the Hock — super-buyer and super-salesman. His close-set eyes were agleam with the battle of barter. His long, horse-like face was shining with the perspiration of persuasion, and all the while his tongue poured out a steady stream of words.

"Look," Harry said, placing a cajoling arm around the little man's shoulders, "I know how it is with you, old timer. I saw you come out of this flophouse. You've got the shorts, ain't you?"

Harry didn't wait for an answer.

"Well, old timer," he went on, "your troubles are over. Harry the Hock is at your service. I suppose you know about me? Everybody does! And I want to tell you, brother, you're a very lucky man. Because only an hour ago someone came to me for a trumpet. Which gives you and me a chance to make a little money, hunh?"

HARRY the Hock let out a horse-laugh that caused his thoroughly bewildered audience of one to jump almost out of his shoes.

Harry grabbed him again, and went on with his spiel.

"Now look, brother. I know it's a kind of old-fashioned horn, but this sucker I got coming tonight won't know the difference. You see, he's buying it for his kid. So what d'ya say? I'll give you a saw buck and it's a deal. Right?"

The little man tore himself from Harry's clutch, and retreated a few steps. His face was pale with indignation. Fire seemed to leap from the blue eyes.

"My—dear—sir! This trumpet is priceless! Why, I wouldn't be without it! No! It's out of the question. I told you I have to play tonight and I don't intend to disappoint my audience."

Harry was quick to realize that the situation was getting out of hand. Quickly he switched to another tack.

"That's what I was going to say, brother, I could see you weren't one of those *corny* trumpet men. You got a following! I know. So why take a chance on blowing some wrong notes. I'll tell you what, brother. I'll raise the ante to twenty bucks and throw in any trumpet in my joint—for free!"

Harry could have served as a model for a "statue of magnanimity" with arms thrown wide, head back, and shoulders squared.

But the little man wasn't having any. Indeed, he seemed to have lost all interest in Harry. His entire attention

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was taken up in a minute inspection of his trumpet. Perhaps the fall had injured it. Satisfied, at last, that it was unharmed, he lifted it to his mouth and softly blew a few chords.

The pawnbroker recognized the symptoms. He had had dealings with musicians before. This old duck was out of the world! Harry knew that something had to be done, but fast. Then he remembered a couple of twenty dollar bills in one of his vest pockets. Maybe the sight of folding money would break down the old guy's resistance. But just as he reached for the bills, the stranger swung the trumpet toward him and blew a terrific blast from it.

Perhaps it was the unexpected sound. Or maybe the sun reflected a blinding light from the mouth of the trumpet. Whatever it was, Harry met with a catastrophe. For in trying to shield his eyes, Harry brought out too quickly the hand with the money in it. He had put the diamond, which he had bought that afternoon, in that same pocket. And he neither saw nor heard it pop out to fall and roll into the gutter.

When he was able to see again, it was too late. The little stranger was halfway down the block. Trumpet back in its accustomed place, under his arm, the plump little figure was trotting along toward the busy intersection at the end of the block.

"Nuts!" said Harry the Hock, reproachfully. "I was too sure of that sale. If I'd of offered fifty, he'd have sold. Oh well, can't make every chump." And with that philosophic remark Harry went regretfully on his way.

Nor did he see the little street urchin run over to investigate the shining object, which had fallen from Harry's pocket.

FINNEGAN, the traffic cop on the corner, wiped the sweat from the leather lining of his uniform cap, using a none too clean handkerchief.

"By all that's holy," he grumbled, "another scorchin' day like this, and I'll be ready for the booby hatch."

An impending traffic crisis at his corner brought forth a string of expletives on the stupidity of all drivers. He was so busy straightening out the traffic jam for the next few minutes that he didn't see what was causing a crowd to collect on one of the four corners.

It was the clear, brassy, high notes of a trumpet, which called his attention to the gathering of the rubbernecks.

For a few seconds Finnegan stared in startled disbelief. This was the last straw! Bellowing his rage he lumbered up, his beefy face red with anger. Unmindful of women, children and idiots, he ploughed his way to the center of the crowd. And there he came face to face with a plump little man in a dark suit.

The golden trumpet was glued tightly to the little man's mouth. The distended cheeks and sweat-beaded brow testified to the effort he was making in the business of blowing his horn. And scattered on the sidewalk before him, were the nickels and dimes which the crowd had evidently contributed.

Finnegan lived for moments like these. Here, before him, was the culprit, caught in the very act of disturbing the peace. And Finnegan had him cold.

Fixing the trumpet player with a steely look, the traffic cop slowly folded his arms across his large chest. Legs spread wide, he stood glowering down on the little man.

Strangely enough the culprit was paying no attention to Finnegan. He was engaged just then in executing some difficult runs on his instrument.

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Finnegan's opening words were as a calm before the storm.

"And what makes you think," he asked softly, "that I'm needing to be serenaded?"

The little man cocked an inquiring eyebrow in his direction; but the music went on.

Storm signals were beginning to fly in Finnegan's face and voice.

"Or maybe you were thinking this corner was Carnegie Hall then."

Finnegan was becoming sarcastic, a bad sign.

Here Finnegan took a deep breath; then the storm broke!

"Well, you can stop that Banshee wailing, right now! 'Tis enough to wake the dead! There'll be none of this musical begging on Finnegan's station."

But the stranger played on. Finnegan knew there was something wrong somewhere. Usually the poor citizen who was caught in his clutches would be begging for mercy. But this old guy just wasn't paying any heed to him.

Finnegan wasn't conscious of the pleading tone in his next words.

"It'd be a fine thing if the sergeant should come by. He'd be wanting to know if one musician was enough; if maybe the chief ought to hire a regular band."

HOW long this could have gone on was never disclosed. For, intermingled with the sound of the trumpet was a new sound; the raucous note of an automobile horn being used at its loudest.

Down the block, weaving in and out of traffic at express train speed, came a low slung raffish looking roadster. Hunched over the wheel was its driver. His drunken blood-shot eyes were fixed unseeingly on the street. He knew only enough to keep his hand on the horn.

And it was just at that moment that little, four year old, Marie Tonnetti decided to see what the world was like across the street. Quite unconcerned over the dangers of traffic, she blithely stepped off the curb and began her journey—full in the path of the hurtling juggernaut with the drunk at its wheel. Now only a hundred feet away, the car bore down upon her at insane speed.

A thrill of horror ran through the crowd. Women began to scream. Others turned away, too faint-hearted to look. In a few seconds it would all be over.

Finnegan took in the situation in one short glance. Forgetting the trumpet-playing beggar and everything else other than the little girl in the path of the racing car, he ran as fast as his two hundred and forty pounds could go. But he would never be able to make it. The car was only forty feet from little Marie.

And the miracle happened.

Seemingly of its own volition, the front wheels of the car swerved to one side. At least that was the way it seemed; for no one saw the driver make any attempt to twist the steering wheel. The car, still going at terrific speed, crashed head-on into the concrete abutment of a safety island.

And high above the tortured, rending scream of steel meeting concrete, was heard the triumphant trumpet of the little stranger.

TERRY SHANNON, ace newshawk for the *Argus*, a morning sheet, was having his usual argument with his friend, 'Drums' Morton. Drums worked for Louie Jones at the Crystal Cavern, a bright spot with a shady reputation.

"Why don't you face the facts,

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Drums?" Terry demanded. "You know the Cavern is just a hangout for Louie Jones' hoodlums. That more killings are plotted there than on a movie set."

"That's just it, Terry," Drums replied. "That's why I don't like to see you stick your neck out by hanging around so much. Louie'll get wise some day and you'll wind up in the river, wearing a concrete nightshirt!"

Terry Shannon's Irish jaw set in a stubborn line. And the be-damned-to-you look in his eyes showed how he felt about it.

"I don't care what Jones thinks," Terry stubbornly replied, "something is going to pop one of these nights and I want to be there when it happens. And the *Argus* is going to have a six column spread Extra, when that night comes."

Morton shook his head in hopeless resignation.

"Well, don't say I didn't warn you, pal," he said.

It was then they heard the sound of a trumpet from down the street.

Morton's muscular fingers gripped Terry's forearm hard.

"Say!" he exclaimed admiringly, "whoever is blowing that horn sure knows his business."

Terry had been looking around to locate the source of the sound.

"Oh, oh," he said, "it's coming from the middle of that crowd on the corner."

"Well, come on then," said Drums, breaking into a run, "I want to see who that guy is!"

They arrived just in time to catch the incident of the speeding car.

"Listen, Drums," Terry directed. "Get the old guy out of here. I'll meet you at the Smith's drug store as soon as I get the angle on this crash."

When Terry Shannon talked that way, Drums knew there was something brewing in the reporter's mind. He didn't waste time in asking any questions. Slowly and inconspicuously he walked up to the little man. Linking arms with him, he firmly pulled him across the street, to the place Terry had designated.

A few minutes later, Terry came over, a big grin on his handsome face.

"What's up, pal?" Drums wanted to know.

"I'll tell you," Terry grinned, "as soon as I 'phone in my story."

When Terry came out of the drug store, the grin was even wider.

"Ye old editor just gave me a mighty fine pat on the back," Terry boasted.

"Yes sir," he continued, "that was a mighty good story I just turned in."

"Cut out all this, and give us the lowdown. What did you tell the editor?" Drums demanded.

"Oh nothing," Terry replied lightly. "Just that Gabriel blew his trumpet on the corner of Clark and Fourth tonight."

"Gabriel! Have you gone nuts, Terry?"

"No, no! You don't get it, chum," Terry explained. "That's because you have no nose for news. What was it that happened? A crash! Worth ten lines of print. But I dressed it up and pointed out a moral. That there is a Gabriel blowing his trumpet on every corner. Tonight, our little musical friend, here, played the part of Gabriel to some drunken driver. And in so doing gave me a story."

TERRY smiled down at the little stranger, who was staring up at him, mouth agape, consternation written large on his face.

"Thanks, little chum," Terry said.

"But I—" the little man began.

"I know. Of course, you're not Gabriel," Terry hastened to reassure him.

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"I hope you didn't mind my making use of you tonight."

Somewhat mollified, the little man said, "Of course not, sir. Now, if you don't mind, I shall be on my way."

"Just a minute—Gabriel!" It was Drums who stopped him this time. "I may not know what's news," he admitted, "but I do know music when I hear it!

"Mr. Gabriel," Drums continued, "I don't know whether you're working or not. But if you're not, I can use a trumpet man in my band."

"In your band?" asked the little man.

"Yes," Drums answered. "I've got a swing outfit over at the Crystal Cavern. And I need a trumpet man. So what do you say? Union scale and Monday nights off!"

"Did you say the Crystal Cavern?" the little man asked.

Drums nodded.

The little man looked at him for a few seconds, without saying anything, as though he were weighing the proposition.

"Yes," he said finally. "I think I will accept your offer. It sounds attractive."

Terry had been looking at his watch. "Hey," he broke in, "it's a quarter to eight. Let's get cuttin' before Louie fires you."

ALTHOUGH it was very early in the evening, the parking lot beside the Crystal Cavern was already half filled. Cabs were beginning to arrive with patrons who wanted to catch the first floor show.

"Psst! Mr. Morton!"

Gertie the hat check girl, called to Drums as they came into the brilliantly lighted lobby.

They walked over to the gesticulating girl.

"What's up, kid? What's eating you?"

Gertie was very much excited and very much in love as she looked up at Drums, worship in her eyes.

"Gee, Mr. Morton," she babbled excitedly, "Janie, your singer, got a bad case of laryngitis and Mr. Jones is blowing his top!"

"To hell with Jones! But that's a shame about Janie," Drums groaned.

"What's all the excitement about Jane's laryngitis," Terry wanted to know. "She'll miss a couple of nights, that's all."

"That's where you're wrong," Drums said sadly. "We got a tip there'll be a talent scout from R. K. O. here tonight. and he's coming just to hear her!"

"So he'll come back in a couple days," reasoned Terry

Drums shook his head sadly.

"No, he won't. He's catching the show between planes. Poor Jane, she worked so hard, just for this opportunity!"

Terry was sympathetic. Everybody liked Jane.

"It's tough," agreed Drums at last, "but I've got to rehearse some numbers for the early show. Let's go, Terry."

They turned away from Gertie and walked back to the little man who was staring about him in a wondering silence. He was holding the trumpet tightly in one hand.

"Holy jumpin' cats," Drums groaned, "look at the horn he's got."

"What's the matter with it?" Terry asked.

"Can't you see, you dope? It's not a trumpet at all. Why it's just a horn. There no music in a thing like that."

"Take it easy pal," Terry cautioned. "It may not look like a trumpet, but remember how it sounded."

Relief came into Drums' eyes.

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"That's right, Terry," he said. "Let's take a look at that horn. Don't remember ever seeing one just like it."

He walked over to the little white haired man. "May we see your horn, oldtimer?"

"Certainly," the old man replied, pride glowing deep in his eyes. He handed the trumpet to Drums. "It has a very interesting history."

It was an unusual instrument. As long as an average trumpet, it had no stops or valves. In fact, it looked like an old-time hunting horn.

Drums examined the curved mouth.

"Look at the fine engraving in the gold," he said to Terry.

"Oh, the engraving!" interrupted the old man. "An Italian friend of mine named Angelo, did that. A true artist!"

Terry had to acknowledge that it was beautiful work. Insofar as he could make out, it appeared to be a scene in Heaven. Cherubs peering out from behind clouds; and the robed figure of a bearded man, some sort of book in his hand, beside a throne. Flanking the throne on the other side was another robed figure. The face on this figure looked strangely familiar. In attempting to see who was on the throne, Terry held the mouth up to where it would catch the most light. It did, too much of it, almost blinding Terry with its radiance. Little black spots danced before his eyes as he handed back the golden trumpet.

"I only hope the boys in the band don't kid you too much about that horn," Drums said.

THE band's dressing-room was behind the elaborate stage of the Crystal Cavern. The eight men, who were already there, looked at the stranger in open curiosity.

"Okay, gang," Drums said, "meet, uh—Gabriel; our new trumpet man."

The chorus of friendly, and frankly amazed, greetings which followed Drums' announcement, brought a sweet, gentle smile to the old man's lips.

It was Terry, however, who brought up the point that Drums had forgotten.

"It'd be a fine thing, pal, if old Gabriel here, doesn't know any modern tunes."

Drums clapped a hand to his forehead.

"Good Lord; I never thought of that! How about it, Gabriel?"

The old man smiled and said "As a matter of truth, I do not know any modern airs. But if you will play any song just once, I think I can repeat it from memory."

Jimmy Bryant, first sax in the band, whistled admiringly. "Some memory you've got there, Jackson," he said.

"There's only one thing to do," Drums said. "Let's see how right he is." He walked over to an elaborate set of traps at one side of the room. "All right, gang. Let's try an easy one: St. Louis Blues."

When they finished, the old man lifted the oddly shaped trumpet to his mouth and played a perfect solo of the song they had done. They went through their entire repertoire; and not once did the little man fail to strike the right notes. Not only did he play the songs perfectly, but his improvising was something to listen to. Before he was through, they all realized that he was by far the best trumpet player they had ever heard.

At the end of their session, the whole band crowded around the old man to congratulate him.

Jimmy Bryant was in ecstasy.

"Jackson," he yelled, "I see where you're going to take a solo in every number. When those cats out there hear you, they'll tear down the joint."

Someone in the band wanted to see

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the trumpet. Jimmy took it from the old man and passed it around. Somehow or other, somebody became careless. The trumpet slipped from his hand and fell to the floor. And when it was picked up again they could see that the gleaming mouthpiece had cracked in two.

The old man was panic-stricken.

"Whatever will I do?" he moaned. "I simply must play tonight."

They were at a loss to understand why he was so panicky. After all, it was only the mouthpiece. And though it, like the horn, was made of some rare metal, still it could be replaced. There were plenty of spare mouthpieces lying around.

But when they tried to insert a substitute, it didn't fit. One after another was brought out, but none fitted. Terry finally made a suggestion.

"Say," he said, "remember those horns you fellows used in that circus skit in the floor show? You know, those horns you used as a flourish for the opening. Well, I'll bet the mouthpiece from one of those will fit Gabriel's trumpet."

They dragged out the property trunk and in a few seconds a horn, not unlike the old man's, was brought into view.

Its mouthpiece proved a perfect replacement for the broken one. The glowing smile on the old man's face repaid them amply for their trouble. And when he blew a few practice chords, none could tell the difference.

SOMEONE knocked timidly at the rehearsal room door.

"C'mon in," Drums called cheerfully. "The door isn't nailed." But when he saw the woebegone look on the face of the slight, pretty girl who came in he hurriedly came over to her.

"Now don't feel so badly, Janey," he said tenderly. "I'll see that you'll get another crack at that talent scout some day."

He took her by the arm and led her across the room toward the group of musicians.

"Janey," Drums said, "I want you to meet Gabriel, our new trumpet man."

"I'm awfully glad to meet you, Mr. Gabriel," Jane whispered.

The old man took both her hands in his. His gentle blue eyes saw a heart-shaped face, great brown eyes and lovely mouth. His smile seemed to embrace her as he said, "Don't worry, child. Maybe you'll sing tonight, as you've never sung before."

"Thanks, Mr. Gabriel," she whispered tearfully. "I'll try. But I just know I can't!"

A buzzer sounded its warning somewhere in the room. Drums looked at his watch.

"Eight-thirty, boys; let's get out there," he said. Then it was that someone noticed the old man had no tuxedo.

"Too late for that," Drums said. "I'll have the electrician give him a baby spot when he takes his solos."

"I'll be at my usual table, pal," Terry called, as they were filing through the door leading to the stand. "See you later."

"Right," said Drums, and closed the door after him.

The bandstand was at one end of the large horseshoe-shaped floor, the bar at the other end. The large dance floor between was already crowded. The tables which bordered the floor were almost all taken, as the band went into its first number, Tuxedo Junction.

Terry Shannon had made his way to his favorite table, just off the bandstand. He ordered a bottle of beer from the waiter, and sat listening to the music.

Peggy O'Brien, the only girl in

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Terry's life slipped quietly into the chair across from him. "Hello, darling," she said softly.

Terry's eyes were tender. "Hello, sweetheart. Tell me, what did the doctor tell you?"

"Just what we thought he was going to say. That Dickie needs an operation. He'd be able to walk again after that!"

There was something in her voice that was left unsaid.

"I see," said Terry slowly. "How much does he want?"

"A thousand dollars, Terry. Oh, darling, where can I get that much money? It's impossible!"

TERRY shook his head sympathetically. He knew how much Peggy loved her younger brother, Dick. Just a year before, Dick had been struck by a hit and run driver. The doctor at the hospital had saved his life but had told Peggy that he would never walk again. Since then she had spent whatever money she had in vain attempts to get someone to make him well. And now, after finding this famous surgeon, she discovered that he wanted more than she could afford to pay. Terry knew what a blow it was to her.

"Now listen, honey," he said, his voice strong with emotion, "we'll get that money. I've never let you down and I'm not starting now. Just don't worry about it."

Her fingernails bit deep into his palm, so fiercely did she grip his hand.

"Oh, my dear," she said. "You're sweet to say that. But I know you haven't the money, either."

The band had finished the medley which preceded Jane's featured number. The one for which the talent scout was waiting. Terry told Peggy what had happened to Jane.

"What a shame!" Peggy exclaimed.

The band had gone into the first bars of "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To," and Jane, wearing the brief costume of a flower vendor, was waiting at the mike for her lead.

Terry knew the microphone would amplify even her smallest whisper, but it wouldn't be enough. There were too many high notes in that song. In his mind's eye he could see the talent scout shaking his head.

And then, just as she started to sing, the old man stood up and began to accompany her on his trumpet.

Terry could see by the surprised and startled faces of the band that the old man had make a mistake. But it was too late to correct it now. The electrician had his instructions and when he saw the little man with the golden trumpet stand up he put the baby spotlight on him.

Terry had to admit the effect was good. The spot highlighted the white hair and ruddy, round cheeks of the musician. And in the light, the trumpet seemed to glow in a golden haze. Even more wonderful was the music the old man was playing. He seemed to be leading Jane in her singing. She had sung the first few words into the mike, but when the old man started to play she moved away from it and sang directly at the audience. Neither Terry nor anyone else had ever heard her sing so well. He could see that the talent scout was visibly impressed. Jane had made the grade.

"I thought you said Jane had laryngitis," Peggy said reproachfully.

Terry's face mirrored his bewilderment. "Listen, Peg," he said, "ten minutes ago that girl couldn't talk above a whisper. I tell you, I heard her."

"Then she got over it mighty fast, because some of the notes she hit were

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almost as high as the trumpet sounds," Peggy said.

The moment Jane finished with her song all the lights in the night club went on. Two men came in from one of the wings, rolling a metal stand before them. A small barrel was attached to the stand.

Tumultuous applause greeted its appearance. And when Louie Jones, the owner of the Crystal Cavern made his way to the front of the bandstand, the applause swelled to a roar.

IF IT is true that animals have their counterparts in humans, then a snake fathered Jones. Sinuously slender, he had a small reptilian-shaped head. His gleaming black hair was brushed flat against his skull. Strangely enough, women were fascinated by him.

Terry turned away in disgust. "Here we go with the old come-on," he said.

Jones was making an announcement over the microphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "it's 'Lucky Barrel' night at the old Crystal Cavern again. If each of you will examine the Lucky Barrel ticket you were given when you came in tonight, you will see that it bears a number. The duplicate of all tickets are in this revolving barrel."

Here one of the attendants, twirled the barrel on its brackets, to the accompaniment of a long roll from Morton's drum.

"The prize tonight," Jones continued, "will be one thousand dollars—in cash. So examine your ticket carefully and remember your number." He turned and went over to the barrel, as all lights went out, with the exception of a large spot focusing on the three men at the barrel.

"One thousand dollars," whispered Peggy feverishly. "Oh, Terry, maybe I'll be the lucky one tonight!"

"Now look, honey," Terry admonished, "don't go building yourself up to an awful letdown. I've told you before the whole thing is fixed. Jones has the winning number palmed in his hand. He just fishes around in that barrel to fool the customers. You'll see," Terry concluded, "one of his friends will be the winner, as usual."

In the meantime, Jones had been going through the business of rolling up his sleeves, to show the customers the whole thing was on the level. Now he was ready to draw out the winning number. The barrel was spun around several times to mix the tickets well.

It was stopped and Jones gave Drums the signal for his trumpet man to blow a fanfare while Jones fished out the winning ticket.

Jones was an excellent actor. The absorbed look of concentration on his face, as he swished his hand around in the barrel, was something to marvel at. So was the look of startled horror which appeared a second later. For instead of a fanfare, the little man had let loose such a blast of sound from his trumpet that it startled everyone present.

Terry was quick to note how feverishly Jones was swishing around in the barrel. He knew what had happened. The unexpectedly loud blare of the trumpet had caused him to drop the winning ticket among the others in the barrel.

"I've waited a long time for this," Terry gleefully whispered. "There's going to be an honest winner in the house tonight."

Jones face bore a sickly smile, as he removed his hand from the barrel. His voice had lost its cheerfulness as he read off the winning number from a ticket in his hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he an-

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nounced, somewhat sadly, "the winning number is . . . five hundred and eighteen. Will the person who holds that ticket please come up here for his or her money."

TERRY was looking at Peggy as though she had gone mad. Her lips were moving, but she wasn't saying anything.

"What's wrong, honey, don't you feel well? What are you trying to say?"

Peggy nodded dumbly and pointed to the ticket in her hand. Then he saw the number. 518! He snatched the ticket from her shaking fingers and rushed up to the bandstand, shouting as he ran, "The winner! The winner!" Here it is Jonesy, old pal, here it is!"

Whatever hope Jones had that one of his friends held the lucky number was squelched at the sight of the young man who was wildly waving a ticket above his head. Glumly, he drew a thin sheaf of bills from an inner pocket and handed it to Terry.

"Here you are—one thousand dollars," Jones said sadly. "And I hope it brings you luck."

"Yeh, I know, you hope it brings me luck—all bad," Terry said, grinning up at the night-club owner.

Just as Terry turned away to rejoin Peggy, he heard Jones ask one of his assistants. "Who is the old guy who blew that trumpet?"

"Some guy Drums hired tonight, boss."

"Well," Jones said, "Tell Drums to fire him tonight, too."

Back at the table, Terry said to Peggy, "Here you are, darling. You get the prize and now Dickie can get his operation and everything will just be fine. Happy, dearest?"

The tear-wet, shining eyes of the girl gave him all the answer he needed. A lump was in the throat of Terry Shannon as he said, "And now, honey, let's sit back and enjoy ourselves."

On the bandstand, Drums gave the little man the signal to take his solo number. When he came up front, into the glare of the large spotlight, a wave of laughter ran through the audience.

"Who is he — Gabriel?" someone shouted.

The rest of the crowd took up the cry, "Gabriel! Gabriel!"

Strangely enough, the little man was unabashed by the laughter and noise. Softly, at first, he began to play. Then more loudly. Soon it seemed that the very walls were assisting him. The crowd had never heard anyone play like that before. And when he was done, he received the biggest ovation of the night.

Terry should have been happy, sitting there with the girl he loved, but something was bothering him. A phrase kept running through his mind, "Almost as high as the trumpet sounds." He kept trying to connect that phrase to something else. An automobile crash, a girl singing, a prize which was won by someone who needed it, and a strange golden trumpet. But there was a piece missing to the puzzle. What was it?

His thoughts were shattered by the arrival of a late group. From the bustle the waiters and Louie Jones were making, Terry knew somebody of importance had arrived. By craning his neck he was able to make out who it was.

"Our next governor, Bentley Merrit, just came in, Peggy," he said. "If you feel like standing on the table, you can see his bald head!"

"Thank you, no. I don't feel like standing on the table," Peggy said firmly. "But didn't you tell me that Louie Jones was backing the other man?"

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"Say, that's right," Terry said. "Maybe he's switched sides. After all, Louie likes to ride a winner."

"I thought Merrit said he was going to clean up places like this," Peggy said.

Terry shrugged his shoulders. "You know what they say about 'the ways of children and politicians.' "

A MAN walked by their table at that moment and in the semi-darkness jostled against Terry. He mumbled an apology and continued on to a table not far removed from Merrit's party.

Terry had become strangely quiet. Something about his strangely watchful attitude caught Peggy's attention.

"What's wrong, Terry?" she whispered.

"That guy who just bumped into me is carrying a gun," Terry said.

He was peering intently at the man, trying to place him. He knew he had seen him before, in some newspaper picture, perhaps.

Louie Jones was talking to Bentley Merrit. Terry could see Merrit shaking his head to some question of Louie's. At last he gave in to whatever request Louie had made. Louie Jones, thin lips parted in a smile, stepped onto the bandstand and held up his hands for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "tonight we are being honored with the presence of a special guest. Bentley Merrit, our next governor, is with us. Perhaps we can get him to say a few words."

Louie Jones walked back to Merrit's table. Applause and cries of "Speech! Speech!" greeted the announcement. Merrit was smiling, quite pleased with the demonstration. A spotlight came swinging out to his table and Merrit rose to his feet to say a few words.

And once again the little man with the snow-white hair made a mistake. As Bentley Merrit parted his lips to speak, the trumpet player rose from his chair, lifted his instrument and began to play.

The sound did not shake the walls, as when Jones had reached into the barrel. Nor was it sweet and tender, as when Jane had sung. Instead, it was almost sad, low and wailing, delivered in a minor key. There was a strange quality to it that haunted the mind. Somehow it was a song of farewell, yet held within it a promise of return. And through the notes, as a central motif, ran a thread of melody that was almost a command, saying:

"Heed my words! I leave you now, but someday you shall hear my horn again . . . someday . . . someday . . ."

Other than the notes pouring from the horn, the room was in absolute silence. People sat at their tables as though turned to stone, their faces shining with an inner light. Bentley Merrit, standing in the brilliant glare of the spotlight, was enraptured by the music as everyone present.

Louie Jones, who had started to rise from his place at a nearby table when Gabriel first began to play, had dropped back into his chair. He sat unmoving, his eyes glued to the old man's face.

There were two within the room, however, whom the song had failed to touch. Terry Shannon's eyes had never wavered from the slender, dapper figure of the man at the next table. The man whose pocket contained a gun. . . .

And then, without warning, the dapper one moved. With a single, lithe movement his hand dipped under the left lapel of his dinner coat, then reappeared, a long-barreled revolver in his hand. A silencer had been fitted over the barrel itself.

Even as Terry screamed a warning, the gunman levelled the weapon at the

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spot-lighted figure of Bentley Merrit and pulled the trigger.

LOUIE JONES sat motionless in his chair, his eyes gleaming in the reflected light from the trumpet's bell. Yet he did not blink under the brilliance, nor did he hear the melody.

For Louie Jones was very dead. The blue-bordered hole in his temple testified to the accuracy of the gunman's aim.

Not that Louie had planned it that way. It was Bentley Merrit who was to have been the target for the killer Louie had hired.

Louie Jones hadn't taken into consideration the little, white-haired man with the golden trumpet. Nor had his gunman.

At the exact moment that the killer's finger tightened on the trigger, the golden trumpet had sounded a weird, disharmonious note. Startled, the gunman's hand had wavered slightly. And the bullet, intended for Bentley Merhit, had found a last resting place in Louie Jones.

Terry snatched the empty beer bottle from his table and leaped forward, bottle held high.

The petrified gunman was still standing, gun in hand, when Terry reached him. The bottle, wielded with terrific force, crashed down on the hoodlum's skull. A second blow was not needed. He went down and stayed down.

A policeman, one of the guards assigned to Merrit, appeared at Terry's side.

"I'll take care of this guy," he said.

"O. K.," fella," Terry said, "but remember, the reward is mine."

The policeman stared at him. "What reward?"

"Well," Terry said, "if you'll take a good look at this lug, you'll see that I've just knocked out Frankie Moroni. This guy's got a five thousand dollar price on his head."

For Terry had remembered at last who the gunner was. He had also found the lost piece to the puzzle that had been bothering him. He remembered now where he had seen the face of the little stranger. In the engraving on the trumpet. He was the other figure flanking the throne. Terry understood, now, the allegorical meaning of the engraving. The figure with the book in his hands, was the Recording Angel. The throne was the throne of God; and the other figure was—Gabriel!

Other things also became clear. The Italian friend who had done the engraving. What was his name? Angelo? The little stranger had meant Michelangelo.

Gabriel had come to pass judgment. And when he blew his trumpet all who heard received their just dues. So a drunken driver had died in a wreck. A policeman had become a hero. Jane had sung so well that her future was assured. And Jones had first lost one thousand dollars, then his life. Peggy had won the prize that her brother might walk again. And last, he, Terry, had knocked out a killer with a five thousand dollar reward on his head.

"And," said Terry, talking to himself, "I'm going a little crazy, from all this excitement. Calling that little old guy Gabriel! I must be nuts!"

HE WAS still shaking his head when he came back to their table. Peggy stared at him strangely. "Are you all right, Terry?"

"Yeah," he said, "sure I'm all right." Then, making up his mind, "Come on, honey, I want to ask that little trumpet player some questions."

But when they reached the band-

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stand the little man had disappeared. He seemed to have vanished. It was Jimmy Bryant who had been the last to see him.

"Sure," he said, "I know where he is. After the shooting, I saw him go back to the rehearsal room."

"Let's find him," Terry suggested. "I want to talk to him."

But the room was empty.

"Where do you suppose he went?" asked Drums.

"The only other door to this room leads to the lobby," Terry said, "and you've got a watchman posted out there to make sure no one steals the stuff in here while you're playing. Let's ask Old Tom if he saw him."

The old man who sat facing the door looked up at them in startled wonder at their question. "Nope," he said. "Ain't no one come in or out since you boys started to play." Nor could they shake him from his story.

It was Drums who saw the mouthpiece.

"Hey, fellas," he said, "the old guy must have been here. Here's the mouthpiece we gave him."

Jimmy Bryant took the mouthpiece in his hand. "That's right," he said, "see, here's where we nicked it, to make it fit."

"All right, he was here; but where did he go?" someone asked. "Old Tom didn't see him, and he didn't come back on the stand."

Jimmy Bryant grinned and said, "Well, we called him Gabriel. Maybe he went back to Heaven to do some real blowing."

Terry joined in the laugh that followed, but he thought, "Yes, Jimmy, maybe it was Gabriel. But I'll bet he's somewhere else right now, blowing his trumpet for judgment—and justice."

THE END.

THE REMARKABLE DANCE OF THE BEES

HAVE you ever seen a bee swoop down in dive bomb fashion—landing on the soft silky petals of a flower? Have you watched it extract its sweet nectar, and after taking its fill of these sugar-like juices, zoom once more into the air?

The average nature lover has probably seen the above not once, but many times. Perhaps, he may have wondered what became of this bee after it took to the air loaded with nectar. Were this wondering individual inquisitive enough to follow this bee to its hive and then look inside, he may have beheld the most fascinating of insect actions.

I will now attempt to describe the interesting activities that take place in the bee-hive, as observed by one of the greatest of all nature study experts—Von Frisch and as described by H. G. Wells in his book, the Science of Life.

Once the bee has had its share of the flower juices, it flies back to its hive. Once inside, it may give up its nectar to the younger workers about it, and then the fun begins. The bee picks out a crowded part of the hive—perhaps in an attempt to draw the maximum attention—and starts the most peculiar of all dances—the dance of the honey-bee.

With rapid steps—first in one direction and then in the other direction—the bee begins to describe narrow circles over its comb. The dance spreads like wildfire. All the spectators about this dancing bee join in; they run about and attempt to touch the abdomen of this dancing bee with their sensitive feelers. Whether they hope to receive messages from the abdomen via their sensitive antennae is not known, but at any rate, the dancing lasts from about a few seconds to a minute at the most. After a minute the dancing bee seems satisfied with her accomplishments and soon it flies off to find more nectar.

What does this all mean? Is this a type of telegraph system? Can the dancing bee vibrate its abdomen in such a manner as to send messages to the group of bees about it—the antennae serving in the capacity of an aerial. After all, the sound we produce when we speak is nothing more than the effect of a vibrating pair of vocal chords upon an outrushing stream of air.

Let us now review some of the interesting experiments of Von Frisch, in which he attempts to get a scientic explanation for the strange and apparently meaningless dance we observed above.

Thought Von Frisch. "If I provide a dish of sugar-water, mark the first few bees that visit it, and then put out half a dozen more dishes in different directions and at various distances from the hive, what will happen? I can be sure that the bees I have marked will return to their hive and go into their strange dance routine. If in their

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dance they can relate to the bees about them the location of the first dish of sugar-water, then I should expect a mass of bees to fly straight from the hive and make their way directly to the particular sugar-dish these marked bees had visited. If the unmarked bees fly to the other sugar-water dishes, those which the marked bees knew nothing about, then the dancing bee cannot relate the location of the spot in which a sugar-dish can be found; the dance then would only serve as a stimulation to the loafing bees—telling them that the sugar hunting is good, but not telling them specifically where the hunt is most plentiful."

The latter condition was found by Von Frisch to be the case. The marked bees went home, deposited their honey, and went into their strange dance. Soon bees were pouring out of the beehive in search of the sugar-dishes. The marked bees wasted no time and made straight for the original dish they had visited—no other. The unmarked bees flew about in all directions and by trial and error soon discovered all of the concealed dishes.

Von Frisch now tried the experiment, which, if we observe the scientific method of reasoning, must be the logical sequence to the above experiment. Namely, in the above experiment we provided our marked bees with a rich supply of sugar-water; "what would happen if we place blotting-paper in one sugar-dish and give these marked bees trouble in sucking up the sugar-water. Would the marked bees then execute their famous honey dance when they arrived at their hive?"

Von Frisch found the negative to be the case. The poorness of the supply seemed to react on their feelers with the result that when those marked bees returned to their hive they simply gave up their nectar and failed to dance.

"What would happen," thought Von Frisch, "if we complicate matters by introducing the scent factor to our experiment? Suppose that when we attract our first few bees to our sugar-dish, we place this dish upon a piece of paper scented with peppermint oil? Suppose we then allow the first bees that appear to suck up some of the juices from this peppermint scented dish. If we let them depart for their hives and after they are gone put out a number of other dishes, some scented as our original dish with a pepperpint fragrance—others scented with other odors—such as oil of thyme, jasmine, bergamot, or lavender, we should get interesting results."

The results are interesting in that the marked bees arrive at the hive and go through this dance routine. Soon many bees leave the hive and the hunt for the sugar-water is on. But the peculiar part of this hunt for the sugar-dishes is that only those dishes which were scented with peppermint will attract any of the bees. The other dishes are ignored, although they contain as good a source of sugar-water as the corresponding peppermint scented dishes. It is as if the marked bee would tell the other bees that the peppermint scented dishes were rich in honey material. The message is probably given through the medium of scent. The marked bee probably absorbs in the hairs of its abdomen, some of the scent of the flowers or dishes it visits. The trail of workers behind the dancing bee probably receive this scent through their long antennae, which they touch to the abdomen of the dancing bee. When these bees have received this specific scent it becomes impressed upon their minds and they will hunt no other dishes or flowers that present a different scent.

Von Frisch soon found that the worker bees themselves possess a "scent-signal." He placed two dishes of sugar-water at the same distance, but in different directions from the hive. Both of these dishes were alike in all factors except that one of the dishes had the blotting paper placed in its sugar-water so as to make it a poor sugar supply. When the two dishes were found by the scouting bees, an interesting thing took place when these scouting bees returned to their hives. Only those bees that visited the good dish, danced; the bees that visited the blotter-filled dish did not dance. When the new flock of stimulated bees took off in search of the new source of nectar, Von Frisch found only about one tenth visited the blotter soaked dish and nine tenths visited the good dish.

Why? A look at the anatomy of the bee gives an answer to this perplexing problem. The worker bees have two scent glands near the top of their abdomens. The worker bee has full control of these small scent factories, and uses them as a code signal. If a worker bee is feeding on a rich source of sugar-water, he scents the air with some of the fragrant vapors concealed in his scent glands. This scent is superimposed upon the already present scent of the flower from which the bee was extracting a good supply of nectar. While a hunting bee will be attracted by the scent of the flower alone, it will be nine times as greatly attracted if it can smell the scent of a bee's vapors in addition to the scent of the flowers.

This does not bring the story to a close by any means. The worker bee does not only hunt nectar; it also hunts for pollen—for the nitrogen content in the pollen is needed in the growth of protoplasm. The method of gathering pollen is somewhat similar to the nectar gathering process. In the case of the pollen, however, the bee after having a successful trip will go into a different kind of dance when it arrives at the hive. In fact this dance is very much different from the nectar dance—varying as much as a Conga would disresemble a waltz. While the nectar-gatherers are guided by the scent of the petals of the flowers, it seems the pollen-gatherers follow the scent of the pollen, and no matter in what petals you place the pollen grains the bee has received directions (or signals) to hunt, the hunter bees will inevitably make straight for this particular pollen—unconfused by the different petal odor.

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Stenton trained his gun on the motionless figure

Stenton carried out the perfect crime. No one could possibly connect him with it. Then why was he being shadowed?

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STENTON'S SHADOW

By DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

WHILE the physician was in the bedroom with old Richard Frawley, Stenton paced nervously back and forth along the marble floored corridor just outside.

It seemed to Stenton, during that interminable wait, that every second was in itself an hour of eternity. And yet, when the physician finally stepped out of the bedroom and closed the door softly behind him, Stenton was aware that the examination had lasted little more than half an hour.

Stenton dropped the cigarette he had been smoking to the floor. He crushed it with his foot, looked up, and met the physician's sympathetically understanding smile.

"How—how is he?" Stenton asked. His voice was strained, husky.

The doctor stepped over to Stenton

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and put his hand on his shoulder in a gesture that was as reassuring as it was kindly.

"I think I can predict quite a few years more for him, Mr. Stenton," the doctor declared. "Rest, a complete abandonment of his business interests, and—when he's strong enough again—a long vacation in a moderate climate, are the things he needs. He has to remember that he isn't as young as he used to be. Heart attacks at his age are to be expected if he follows such strenuous schedules as he has been."

"Thank God!" Stenton blurted fervently. He ran a visibly trembling hand across his brow. "Thank God! I was afraid that—"

The doctor smiled reassuringly once more.

"I understand, Mr. Stenton. I know exactly how you felt. It must have been a terrible shock to think you might lose Mr. Frawley. I realize how much your relationship with him has meant to both of you. But stop worrying. Unless something entirely unforseen occurs, my prediction is that Mr. Frawley might well reach eighty-five or more."

Stenton's relief was unmistakable and he made no effort to conceal his emotional state from the physician.

"Can—can I see him now?" Seenton asked.

"I'd wait an hour or longer," the doctor advised kindly. "I gave him a slight sedative which produced almost immediate slumber. It would be better if he had a little rest."

"Certainly," Stenton agreed readily. "Certainly. And what about a nurse?"

"I could recommend several," the physician suggested.

"Splendid," Stenton agreed. "And when could you arrange to have one arrive?"

"In three or four hours at the most," the doctor said.

"That will be soon enough?" Stenton asked anxiously.

The physician smiled. "He's in no danger. That passed with the attck. I can see absolutely no chance of another attack. But should anything come up before the arrival of the nurse, please call me at once. I'll be at the hospital."

"Of course," Stenton said . . .

WHEN Stenton had shown the doctor to the front door, he went immediately to the drawing room where he mixed himself a whisky and soda at the small table bar there.

Calmly, then, Stenton seated himself in a comfortable armchair, lighted a cigarette, and relaxed. He looked slowly around the big, old-fashioned drawing room. Its paintings, tapestries, rugs and furnishings were heavy, ponderous, expensive. They had a solidity, a stuffiness, about them which had long seemed oppressive to Stenton.

Years ago this house, the Frawley Mansion, had been one the of the most luxurious homes in this wealthy residential district. It had been built by the present Richard Frawley's father, and handed through the will of the dying multimillionaire, to his son with the request that he always maintain it as his home.

Richard Frawley had done that. Even though he had never married, he had maintained this stuffy, gloomy old mansion as his home even after his father's death. But now, the once-young Richard Frawley lay upstairs in the palatial master bedroom, an old, weary man. A man without a wife, children, even relatives. A man with no one in the world to count on save Stenton.

He had counted on Stenton for many years now. He had started depending on Stenton when he adopted him as a boy from a city orphanage some twenty

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years before. From that day forward, Frawley had counted on his charge as if he had been in reality his son.

Stenton had been eight years old when the millionaire Frawley took him from the drab existence of the orphanage into the splendor and financial glitter of this now decadent home.

"I have always hoped that I might someday have a son," Frawley told the youthful Stenton. "In you, my hope can be realized. Always think of me as your father, boy. Never doubt or distrust me for a moment, for I shall never doubt or distrust you. From this day on, you are my son."

From that day Stenton had lived as Richard Frawley's son, the son of a millionaire. Richard Frawley had thought it wiser not to change the boy's name to his own, and hence Stenton had kept the name with which he had been christened at the orphanage.

He had attended the most expensive and exclusive prep schools, gained rugged young manhood at the most celebrated of mountain summer resorts and playgrounds, and at last matriculating at a world famous university which his father-by-adoption had attended.

Stenton did not throw away the opportunities, the privileges, granted him by his father-through-adoption. Indeed, he was an excellent student. His grades were brilliant, his ability to sop up knowledge utterly incredible. There was a cold, hard, ruthless efficiency in everything he undertook. His teachers respected young Stenton, but saw in that ruthless purpose of his something beyond their ken. Something as chilling as ice.

As Stenton worked and learned, so did he play. His campus escapades grew to legends. He figured prominently in almost all the notorious collegiate high life scandals. But somehow he manged to save himself from dismissal. And somehow he saw to it that word of these escapades never reached his pseudo-father, Richard Frawley. Perhaps one of the things that saved Stenton from dismissal was the fact that his hard drinking, fast gambling, riotious collegiate existence seemed never to interfere with the excellence of his scholastic grades.

At any rate, his professors added to their data on young Stenton one additionally curious fact. It seemed that, although he figured prominently in collegiate social life, he had not a single friend among his fellows. Perhaps Stenton wanted no friends. Or perhaps his fellow students felt his contemptuous scorn of them, and therefore wanted none of him.

UPON graduation from the university, Stenton was given a world tour with which Richard Frawley expected him to round out his education. On that tour, which lasted for over a year, Stenton picked up a remarkable fluency in seven foreign languages, not to mention an apparently inexhaustible fund of information concerning the history, customs, and culture of the peoples of the countries in which he visited.

Stenton returned from this tour to a place in Richard Frawley's business. Needless to say, Richard Frawley became dependent upon his adopted son in matters pertaining to his own business in little more than two years.

To say that Richard Frawley was proud of the accomplishments of his pseudo-son would be depicting that aging industrial tycoon's emotions mildly.

He was only too pleased to find Stenton fitting into his business so admirably. And, of course, the fact that Stenton was "home" once again, residing with Frawley in the huge old brown-

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stone mansion, was something else that meant even more to the millionaire.

"It's great to have you back here, son," Frawley told Stenton. "And frankly, boy, I'm proud to have you at my side wherever we go. But, however, don't let me try to monopolize your outside time and interests completely. I know I'd like to do just that. But undoubtedly you have friends and associates more your own age with whom you'd like to spend your leisure time. Old fogies like myself and my friends at the club can't be expected to hold much interest for a young blood like you."

Stenton had demurred. He insisted that he much preferred his pseudo-father's company to any other. This, of course, strengthened the affection which the aging Frawley already felt toward Stenton, and made his pride in the young man even greater.

Undoubtedly Richard Frawley never realized that Stenton, although a personable young man, charming as well as brilliant, was quite curiously lacking in friends and even close associates.

NOW, sitting there in the drawing room of the old brownstone mansion, Stenton allowed all these things to pass through his mind as he calmly sipped his whisky-soda and smoked his cigarette. He thought of all these things and their place in the pattern of years in which he'd been the adopted son of Richard Frawley, and smiled.

Richard Frawley, old Richard Frawley, now, lay upstairs alone and ill in that great canopied bed. Stenton had expected the heart attack which was the cause of the old man's present condition. He had been expecting it for over a year now.

He had been more or less counting on it.

Stenton finished his whisky-soda and crushed out his cigarette in a bronze ashtray at his elbow. Glancing down at his watch, he noted that it was almost ten minutes since the doctor had been ushered from the brownstone mansion.

Under the influence of the sedative given him by the doctor, old Richard Frawley was undoubtedly still in peaceful slumber. The physician had said that he'd send a nurse around inside of three or four hours at the most.

Stenton, methodically enough, was taking every last advantage of the time allotted him for his plans.

As he started up the staircase to the second floor, he lighted another cigarette and was suddenly surprised to realize that his hands were trembling ever so slightly in the process.

Stenton frowned at this, mentally berating himself that it could be possible.

Yet, by the time he stood atop the second floor landing, a certain uneasiness—reflected in the moisture of his palms and the acceleration of his heartbeat—became additionally evident to Stenton.

"I'm acting like a fool," he told himself. "A damned fool!"

However, he stood there at the top of the second floor landing, looking down the marble-floored corridor leading to old Frawley's bedroom door. Hesitated there in spite of himself.

"I've waited for this too long," Stenton told himself, "to get squeamish at the last minute."

Stenton took a deep breath, threw back his shoulders, and started down the corridor in the opposite direction to old Frawley's bedroom door. He was going to his own bedroom, several doors away.

It was scarcely two minutes later when Stenton emerged from his own bedroom. And when he did, he carried a small, soft cloth in his hand. A cloth

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which had been soaked in a solution prepared by Stenton several hours previously.

Now he started resolutely toward old Frawley's bedroom door. There was no hesitation, furtiveness, in his stride. It was Thursday night, and the majority of the servants were out. Charles, the old butler, was asleep in his quarters over the garage in the back of the brownstone mansion. None of the others would be back until midnight or later.

But again Stenton hesitated. Hesitated as he stood with his hand on the knob of old Frawley's bedroom door.

Supposing the old man were awake?

"That won't make any difference!" Frawley snapped irritably to himself. And a hidden voice, deep in his soul, said: *Stenton, can you do this thing? Can you do this thing to the man who has done so much for you?*

STENTON was ruthless, cold, calculating. This was something he had been planning for the last four years. This was his chance. Stenton was no fool. Standing there, he told himself again that he was no fool. He reminded himself, savagely, that he had divorced himself long ago from that thing men call a conscience.

But have you? said the inner voice.

Have you? it asked again.

Stenton steeled himself against those taunting mental voices. Grimly, he summoned the almost indomitable forces of his will—long trained for a moment such as this—to drive from his consciousness all remaining remnants of that inner voice of decency which was his conscience.

The veins stood out in his temples, his brow shone with the perspiration of this superhuman effort to smother that tiny flame which alone stood in the way of his desire.

And for the dynamic, exhausting eternity of a moment, Stenton's conscience was locked in death grip with his will power.

And then it was over.

As if something had suddenly snapped, severed completely from his spiritual being, Stenton felt the swift, boundless freedom of utter evil flood through his being.

His conscience was gone—driven from his body as if it had been a physical thing, divorced from his soul with the surgical finality of a knife thrust.

The power of his will had triumphed!

Stenton stood there with his hand on the knob of the door, momentarily shaken by the conflict that had been waged in his soul. Something closely akin to fright passed through his eyes and was gone in the next instant.

He smiled then, a cold, curiously inhuman smile, and turned the knob beneath his hand.

Softly, Stenton opened the door. Noiselessly, he stepped into the room. There in the big bedroom, scarcely ten yards from where Stenton paused, was the great, canopied bed in which the sleeping Richard Frawley lay.

A small light burned on a table a few feet from the head of the bed. Across the room, the blinds were drawn.

Stenton saw Frawley's white head against the pillows, then, and started softly toward the bed.

Beside the small table on which the light burned, Stenton paused. He was standing less than three feet from the bed. Old Frawley's eyes were closed, his breathing quiet and regular.

"So you'll live for quite a while longer, eh?" Stenton thought.

Now Stenton stepped up to the bed. From where he stood he could bend forward and touch the old man's forehead.

Stenton glanced down at the solution-soaked cloth in his hand. He

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leaned forward, holding the cloth away from him, and clamped it swiftly, firmly, down across the old man's nose and mouth.

THERE was a muffled cry, a spasmodic upheaval of the bedclothes that covered old Frawley, and one of the old man's arms groped weakly toward the hand holding the suffocating, solution-soaked cloth.

But it never reached Stenton's hand. It fell back, an instant later. And the brief upheaval of the bedclothes stopped as the frail body beneath them went lifeless.

Stenton held the cloth there for several moments longer. And then he took it away, straightened up, and looked down at the body of the man he had just murdered.

It was done. It was over. Richard Frawley lay dead in the great canopied bed in which his ancestors had breathed their last. And the man he had taken as a son, the man to whom he had given the care and kindness and legal privileges of a son, had slain him!

Stenton smiled softly.

"Goodbye, old fool," he whispered. "Say hello to the worms for me."

Then he turned away from the bed. There were many things to do now. The solution, a devilishly undetectable concoction which Stenton had gone to considerable trouble to obtain, would leave no traces. But the small bottle of it in Stenton's room, and the cloth soaked with it in his hand, were things that he must dispose of immediately.

There would be a telephone call to the doctor. He'd better wait an hour or so longer for that, as he'd planned. Wait an hour or so, then declare that he'd only then stepped into the old man's bedroom, and that he couldn't tell when the old fellow had had this unexpected second attack.

The nurse would arrive after a while. But not before Stenton had called the doctor. And then, of course, there would be all the rest of the details that follow any death.

Still smiling, Stenton moved to the door. There, he paused for an instant and glanced back at the great canopied bed. The light on the small table still burned, and from the doorway you couldn't tell if the old man were sleeping or dead.

Unless, of course, you had just murdered him. . . .

IT WAS no surprise to Stenton that things went off so very smoothly in the next three days. He had planned everything much too thoroughly for it to have been otherwise.

The newspapers, of course, carried the story of Richard Frawley's death in appropriately wide column spreads, carrying, too, the biography of that internationally famous millionaire.

Stenton saw to it that, for his part, the items in the papers were of precisely the tone he desired. It had never been a secret to anyone that Stenton would inherit all the Frawley commercial enterprises upon the old man's death. Nor was it supposed that the bulk of his personal fortune would go to anyone but Stenton.

That people who knew Stenton as well as old Frawley would surmise that the pseudo-son of the millionaire might have long waited for the untold riches and power of his inheritance was ridiculous. All were aware that Stenton, ever since he'd gone into the old man's business, had himself amassed a fortune great enough to enable him to live in luxury the rest of his long life without benefit of the old man's legacy.

Naturally, therefore, the possibility that Stenton might have been instrumental in the death of his benefactor

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occurred to no one. It would have seemed a preposterous assumption, unless one knew the mind of Stenton.

And Stenton had no friends, no acquaintances, close enough to have the slightest inkling as to the sort of a person he was. There was none who realized that Stenton could never be content with the small fortune he already possessed. There was none to suspect that Stenton wanted riches and more riches, not for the luxury they would afford, but for the power they would place in his ambitious, conscienceless hands.

None knew the soul of Stenton, save Stenton himself.

IN THE week that followed old Frawley's funeral, Stenton completely reorganized the dead millionaire's holdings. The old man's will had not been read, his final requisitioning of property, personal and commercial, had not been legally cleared. But this made no difference. All took it for granted that Richard Frawley's legacy would leave Stenton with practically everything the old man had possessed.

Stenton found himself with an untroubled mind to carry out what was really the beginning of his plans for power beyond all ambition. Indeed, it surprised him somewhat that his conscience—from his moment of severing it to go through with the murder of the old man—had never troubled him after that.

This suprised him but, naturally, was a matter of deep elation. Though he had never before possessed a tenth of the conscience of a normal man, even knaves, he realized, had occasional qualms about their crimes. Stenton, before the murder of his benefactor, now and then had had such occasional qualms. But it seemed now as if they were gone forever.

Stenton made arrangements to dispose of the loathsome old brownstone mansion, gave notice to the servants who had been a part of the Frawley household almost since their childhood, dismissed several of Richard Frawley's oldest and closest friends from important positions in the commercial houses controlled by the old man, and, generally, carried out the beginning of his plans with ruthless high-handedness.

On the afternoon before the old man's will was to be read, Stenton called in the board of directors of the Frawley enterprises and told them in no uncertain language of the policies he meant to inaugurate.

Stenton was no fool at this conference. He was clever enough to insult only those board members whom he considered to be dead timber and useless to his plans. When they, as he had expected, came to indignant disagreement with his suggestions, he regretfully requested and received their resignations.

When Stenton had cleared the conference of the dead timber, he went into an elaboration of his replanning schemes to the remaining members. In some of these men Stenton had previously recognized cold, cunning ruthlessness comparable to his own. They fitted perfectly into his pattern. In others of them, those who were not basically the sort that Stenton desired, Stenton had carefully been able to discover, long ago, hidden indiscretions in their lives. Subtly, Stenton made each of these otherwise respectable men aware that he had knoweldge of the errors in their pasts. And even more subtly, Stenton made it plain to them that he expected—because of the hold on them his knowledge afforded—their implicit compliance with his every demand. No, Stenton was no fool. The names of these otherwise blameless men

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would enhance the reputation of his corporations. Stenton could use them in that fashion—until he had no further need of them.

At length, about six o'clock that evening, Stenton closed the conference he had called.

Sitting around the huge, polished table which he headed, were all those men he had selected, for one reason or another, to fit into the new pattern he'd established.

Stenton smiled coldly at them, crushed out his cigarette in the ebony and onyx ashtray by his elbow, and rose.

"I think this meeting, although it has been rather long, has established my new policies clearly in the mind of each of you gentlemen who comprise my reshuffled board of directors," Stenton announced. "I am also quite certain that the eventual scope of operations under our reorganized corporations is quite clear to all of you. Until today each of you considered himself an important cog in one of the nation's greatest financial and commercial enterprises. The Richard Frawley Corporations were indeed tremendously important. I am not trying to belittle what they have been in the past. However, mark my words, gentlemen—the world is just beginning to comprehend what I and my corporations will do in the future. We shall someday be the greatest industrial and financial house in the world. We shall someday virtually *own* this world."

Silence greeted Stenton's words as he closed the conference. Silence, and an awed, incredible fear in the eyes of even the most ruthless and ambitious of his listeners.

They were just beginning to have some conception of the mind of the man who planned power that would bring him mastery of the world. They were the first men to have even the slightest glimpse into the cold, conscienceless soul of Stenton. . . .

ON IMPULSE, Stenton decided to forego dining out that evening. And when he left the large Frawley Building, after the momentous conference, he sent his limousine and chauffeur ahead, choosing to walk the not too long distance to the old brownstone mansion.

It was midwinter, and the early evening was already dark. A light snow had started, and the thin, confetti-white flakes sifted softly down through the warm glow of the street lamps.

Stenton walked briskly, his collar turned up, eyes straight ahead, his thoughts concerned with the official reading of old Frawley's will at ten o'clock the next morning.

It had been the old man's request that the will be read in the library of the old mansion, as previous Frawley wills had always been. All the old family servants would be there, plus a scattering of distant relatives or their lawyers.

Stenton smiled thinly at this thought. The vultures would gather to pick the bones of the sheep the wolf had slain. Or so the vultures thought. Stenton was confident that the bulk of everything would go to him. There would be but slim pickings for the vultures. He, Stenton, the wolf, would have cleaned the carcass too well.

Turning off into a side street, Stenton stopped for a moment at a corner newsstand to purchase a paper. Briefly, he scanned the headlines and the smaller stories on the front page, Swiftly, then, he flipped to the financial pages, studied the final market returns which, in the emergency of the board conference he had forgotten to check, and then carelessly tossed the newspaper into the snowdrifted gutter.

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It was then that Stenton noticed for the first time that someone stood across the street in the shelter of a doorway—someone who was looking at him.

The man was tall, about Stenton's physical dimensions, and wore a black coat with the collar turned up as was Stenton's. His black fedora was pulled low over his eyes, so that Stenton was unable to see anything of his features.

There was no evidence whatsoever that the man was staring at Stenton. He might well have been staring at the newsstand and all who paused at it. But there was something, something akin to intuition, that made Stenton *feel* the fellow's gaze regarding him steadily. This feeling, this intuition, had been so strong, in fact, that Stenton began to wonder if it had not been the cause of his having noticed the watcher in the first place.

For fully half a minute Stenton stared across the street at the figure in the doorway. Stared steadily, curiously, uneasily, as if compelled to do so by some hypnotic force.

And as he stared, the figure in the doorway returned the stare while remaining motionless, hands deep in his overcoat pockets.

Suddenly Stenton cursed irritably.

"My God!" he told himself. "I don't know what caused *this* crazy fit of imagination. The man's just standing there, waiting for someone, perhaps, and staring at the newsstand. What on earth is wrong with me?"

Stenton took his gaze from the man in the doorway and turned away, starting down the lonely little side street at a brisk pace. He was suddenly angered with himself. This had been the first spot of nerves he'd had since he'd killed old Frawley.

"What a juvenile, imaginative rash!" Stenton told himself wrathfully. Then he determined to push the incident from his mind so that it wouldn't disturb him further.

WHEN he had walked a block, however, Stenton, in spite of himself, turned swiftly and faced in the direction from which he had come. Squinting through the snowflakes, he peered across the street to see if the man in the doorway was still standing there.

The man was no longer in the doorway. He now stood on the sidewalk in the middle of the block, on the other side of the street. Stood motionless, as if he had paused the instant Stenton wheeled about. As if—and Stenton raged at himself for the thought—*he had started to follow Stenton.*

For a moment Stenton stared at the black-clad figure. And again his intuition told him that the stranger was staring at him.

Stenton cursed and turned away suddenly. Swiftly, he determined to take another side-street route to the brownstone mansion. An even more deserted side-street route. Then he would be able to determine if this ridiculous imagining held any grain of reality.

Quickly, Stenton turned right. Now he walked even more briskly, his long strides eating up the distance. And at the end of the next block he stopped suddenly as before and wheeled to face in the direction from which he'd come.

Again the dark overcoated figure stood half a block from him on the opposite side of the street. And again Stenton felt that the man had stopped the instant Stenton had wheeled about.

Stenton's breath came fast and his heart pounded in sudden excitement. He had been correct. It hadn't been his nerves. He was being followed!

For fully a minute Stenton stood there staring at the motionless figure. And during that minute, the other man

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halfway back across the street seemed not to move a muscle.

Stenton was not a coward. He had never known fear. Not physical fear. Quickly, coolly, his mind sorted the possible meanings that might be attached to the purpose of the stranger's shadowing.

Police?

The thought was ridiculous. The police could not suspect anything. The autopsy had not revealed anything but the death of old Frawley by heart attack. The rest of the evidence had been thoroughly, painstakingly, destroyed. No—Frawley was buried, safely out of the way. He had died, officially, of a heart attack. It was impossible to think that the police might have unearthed anything to point to any other conclusion. And if they had done so, it would be ridiculous to assume they would have him trailed. If they had stumbled over any evidence pointing to the truth they would have apprehended Stenton immediately. No, that man back there across the street was not from the police.

But he might be a thug, a gunman, a bandit planning to force Stenton at gunpoint into some alley as soon as the neighborhood became deserted enough.

That seemed to be more likely.

ON SUDDEN impulse, Stenton crossed the street to the side on which his follower stood. Then he started walking toward him. And suddenly the other turned away and began to walk rapidly in the opposite direction.

Stenton increased his own pace until it was almost a run. The other did the same, keeping the distance the same between them.

Stenton stopped abruptly.

The stranger stopped also. Stopped as immediately as if he had been facing Stenton and able to see that he'd paused. Now the stranger turned to face Stenton again.

For a moment they were staring at one another once more. Then Stenton laughed, a dry, brittle laugh. His second conclusion must have been correct. The man following must be a bandit, although a timid bandit.

Stenton smirked contemptuously. An amateur bandit, a bumbling knave. Stenton had no respect for a knave who lacked courage. And yet, why did the fellow still stand there? Why hadn't he continued to flee when Stenton had started after him?

It was silly, damned silly. Utterly ridiculous. And yet, it was not right. There was something strange about it. Something eerily, ominously—although ridiculously—strange about it.

Stenton's amused contempt vanished in the face of a renewed surge of irritation and impatience. He cursed and turned away, starting back to the corner from which he'd started his pursuit of the fellow.

And then he saw the taxi.

It was unoccupied, and had just turned the corner toward which Stenton was walking. He shouted at it.

The driver heard Stenton's shout, made a U turn in the street and pulled up to the curb where Stenton waited.

Stenton climbed into the cab, gave the driver his address, and settled back. But as the cab pulled away in a clash of gears, Stenton could not resist one last glimpse of the stranger through the rear window of the vehicle.

The dark coated stranger still stood there, as Stenton had left him. He was, of course, watching the swift departure of the cab.

ON THE way to the brownstone mansion, Stenton thought irritably about telephoning the police when he

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arrived home. He could give them what little description he had of the man who'd followed him, and hope that perhaps they'd nab the fellow.

But after he had lighted a cigarette, Stenton decided against that. It would sound too ridiculous, and besides, there was no sense in bringing the police into anything concerning his private life.

During the rest of the ride home, Stenton was unable to put the incident from his mind. There were other things to which he wanted to put his attention. Considerably more important things than a ridiculous encounter with a timid bandit.

And yet, as Stenton paid the cab driver in front of the mansion, he still chaffed mentally over the incident, unable to drive it from his mind.

As the cab pulled away from the front of the house, Stenton saw the man again.

For an instant he wasn't certain it was the stranger. And for another instant he knew it *couldn't* be the stranger.

But it was, and he stood across the street at the far end of the block, directly under a street lamp, gazing toward the brownstone mansion.

Stenton blinked unbelievingly, his jaw falling agape.

The stranger, as before, stood utterly unmoving, hands in his overcoat pocket, black fedora pulled low over his eyes, collar turned up high beneath his chin.

Stenton's wrath suddenly broke its dam. He stepped down from the curb and started to cross the street.

And then the stranger turned and started in the opposite direction, moving with a long, swift unhurried stride which was obviously designed to keep the same distance between them as before.

Stenton stopped, halfway across the street, and at that instant the stranger stopped also.

Stenton opened his mouth to shout. Then he clamped his jaws shut, angrily clenching and unclenching his fists. A wave of maddening exasperation flooded him, and he fought for self-control.

Suddenly he turned and without looking back over his shoulder, walked back to the sidewalk and through the big iron gates opening into the steps of the brownstone mansion.

Not once did Stenton turn as he climbed the steps. At the top, he punched the bell angrily, feeling the stranger's eyes on his back as he did so.

STENTON waited several minutes before Charles, the old butler, finally opened the door.

The old servant was startled by the expression on Stetson's usually poker-cold face.

"G-good evening, sir," he stammered. "Is—is there something wrong, sir?"

Stenton merely glared at the old servant, and strode angrily past him into the big marble hallway. The butler closed the door and hurried after him in a futile effort to assist Stenton with his coat.

"We—we didn't expect you so early, sir," the butler apologized. "We thought that you would be dining out. There is nothing prepared. Cook will have to—"

"I understand all that," Stenton snapped irritably. "Get something prepared as quickly as you can."

With that Stenton strode wrathfully into the drawing room. He went immediately to the liquor stock, and noticed, as he prepared himself a strong drink, that his hands were shaking.

Stenton downed four fingers of whisky without benefit of soda. Then

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he looked speculatively at the bottle for a moment, and repeated the process.

He lighted a cigarette and saw that much of the tremor in his hands had been steadied by the liquor.

Now Stenton poured himself two fingers of whisky, and this time added soda to it. Then glass in hand, cigarette hanging from his lips, he walked quickly to the wide drawing room window. It faced out on the street from which Stenton had just come. It presented an unimpeded view of the corner on which he had last seen the stranger.

But the stranger, Stenton saw, no longer stood on that corner. He had advanced to a position on the other side of the street directly across from the old brownstone mansion. And he was gazing stolidly up at the window in which Stenton stood!

Stenton's curse was hoarse, involuntary. He reached for the cord controlling the blinds and savagely drew them shut.

Walking back to the liquor cabinet, Stenton placed his drink on the top of it. Then he ran a trembling hand across his eyes.

"God," he whispered. "What in the name of all unholy is this? Who is he? What is he? Am I losing my mind?"

Stenton wheeled and started for the cradle telephone in the corner of the drawing room. He was reaching for it when he stopped abruptly, straightened up.

Something, some instinct, had told him that the action he'd contemplated would be useless. Calling the police would not help. He knew it would not help. Why he knew so, Stenton had no idea.

Stenton strode back to the liquor cabinet, and ignoring his moderate whisky and soda, took a clean glass and the bottle. He poured a tremendous hooker of whisky into the glass, lifted it and drained it in a gulp.

Then he turned away, starting, in spite of himself, back to the window. There Stenton drew the blinds back with one hand enough to peer through them out into the street.

The stranger still stood there, directly across from the brownstone house. As far as Stenton could see, he hadn't changed his watching position by so much as the movement of a muscle.

STENTON let the blinds fall back into place. Shakily, he moved to an armchair and sank down in it. Leaning forward, he put his head in his hands, closing his eyes and fighting against the nameless fear that was beginning to possess him.

This was insane, ridiculously insane. He should go at once to the telephone and call the police. He should describe the loiterer outside his house, he should explain to them that the fellow had followed him. He should—

But he couldn't. Stenton knew he couldn't.

He didn't dare. Supposing the fellow were someone who, somehow, *knew*.

That was preposterous!

No one knew. No one save Stenton—and old Frawley. There couldn't have been any slip-up. If his crime had been discovered by the police it would have meant his apprehension by now. And if it had been discovered by anyone else, servant or housebreaker, the blackmail wouldn't begin in this fashion.

No. It was not that. It couldn't be that.

Stenton rose from the armchair, walked to the liquor cabinet, and poured himself another stiff drink.

The whisky was steadying him, but

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not enough. Although by now he'd consumed a considerable amount of it, he found his mind not even a trifle fogged. He was as completely sober now as he had been when he'd entered the drawing room.

Stenton stepped around the liquor cabinet and tugged at the tassled bell cord which would summon old Charles, the butler.

He lighted another cigarette as he stood there waiting, and in another minute Charles appeared breathlessly at the drawing room door.

"You rang, sir?"

Stenton looked wordlessly at the old servant for a moment. Then he cleared his throat, gathering himself together by that commonplace action.

"Must Cook take all night to serve my dinner?" Stenton said, and he found his voice was rasping, ragged.

"It—it is almost ready, sir," the old man stammered. Then, his face wreathed in concern, he asked anxiously: "Is something the matter, sir? Are you ill? Do you wish me to telephone for a doctor?"

"Ill? Ill?" Stenton laughed harshly, unconvincingly. "What makes you think I'm ill?"

The old butler looked both concerned and embarrassed.

"Your complexion, sir, is positively ashen."

Instinctively Stenton's hand went to his cheek. Then he jerked it away and glared balefully at the old man.

"Get out of here!" he rasped.

When the old butler had retreated bewilderedly, Stenton went again to the wide window of the drawing room. Again he peered out through the corner of the drawn blinds.

The stranger still stood where Stenton had last seen him. His eyes were fixed unwaveringly, it seemed, on the window of the drawing room . . .

IT WAS almost eight o'clock when Stenton pushed the last of the scarcely touched plates away from him and rose from the table.

He had been served by old Charles; and the butler, frightened and alarmed at Stenton's manner, had made a poor job of concealing the emotional disturbance under which he labored.

Stenton was aware that the old man had been on the verge of again suggesting that he call a doctor. But the fear of Stenton's possible reaction had forced him to hold his tongue.

Stenton had tasted but a few mouthfuls from each plate, almost immediately pushing them away after each course. And when the uneaten meal was over, old Charles timidly asked: "Is there anything more, sir?"

"No," Stenton snapped. "You can get the hell back to your room. I won't need you for the rest of the night. Now, clear out!"

Stenton had left the dining-room, then, drawn irresistibly back to the drawing room. There, after several more drinks, he had at last stepped over to the window and peered through the blinds out into the street.

The stranger still stood where he had been before. Stood in exactly the same position as before. He had apparently been as motionless as a statue.

Stenton couldn't see his eyes, of course. The light of the street lamp and the distance itself made that impossible. But Stenton *knew* those eyes were still unwinkingly staring at the drawing room window.

For an instant after he had again let the blinds fall back into place, Stenton considered going out there into the street in an effort to catch the fellow once more.

But he discarded his idea immediately. It would be impossible, as it had been before, he told himself. But

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in spite of his rationalization, Stenton now doubted whether he wasn't afraid that he *might* be able to catch the fellow.

Stenton left the drawing room, then, and went upstairs to his bedroom. As he reached the top of the marble staircase he saw the doorway of the bedroom that had been old Frawley's. For an instant Stenton found his gaze hypnotically glued to it, and then he was able to tear his eyes away.

In his own bedroom, Stenton changed to a dressing gown and slippers, found some papers he had intended to work on, picked them up and started for the door. Then, motivated by an unexplainable instinct he stepped to the drawer of his dresser, opened it, and took out the small, compact automatic pistol he kept there.

Stenton slipped the weapon into the pocket of his dressing-gown, and with his papers once more in hand, left his bedroom and went back downstairs.

Something caused him to pause when he reached the hallway. He had the sensation that the front door had been but recently opened to admit someone from the street. There was a chill in the air, as if the hallway still carried some of the wintery air from outside.

STENTON set his jaw. That was too preposterous. Had anyone come into the house while he'd been upstairs he would have heard him quite plainly. Fighting off any further suppositions of that nature, Stenton went on toward the drawing room.

He was just before the threshold of that room when he paused again, as if frozen by the sudden, numbing chill of premonition that swept up his spine.

Something deeper than instinct told him that someone was waiting for him in that drawing-room. Some chilling sixth sense that was like an icy breath on the nape of his neck.

Stenton's hand went to the gun in the pocket of his dressing gown, and his other hand tightened convulsively on the sheaf of papers. Steeling himself with superhuman will, Stenton stepped into the drawing room.

The stranger was there.

He stood beside the small desk in the right corner of the room. He still wore the black overcoat, collar up, and the black fedora, brim low over his eyes.

Stenton's heart was pounding frantically from something deeper, more primitive than physical fear. Instinctively, he whipped the automatic from the pocket of his dressing-gown and trained it rigidly on the intruder.

"Now I'll find out," Stenton heard his voice rasping. "Just who in the hell are you!"

The stranger was still motionless, even though he spoke.

"Don't you know who I am?" he asked. His voice was low, soft, almost a whisper.

"Damn you," Stenton grated, "put those arms above your head, and don't try anything! Who are you? Why have you been following me?"

"Don't you know?" the stranger asked softly.

It was then that Stenton began to sense it. Began to sense it in spite of the fact that the stranger's face was almost completely shadowed and that he still wore coat and hat. There was something excruciatingly, tantalizingly familiar about that figure.

"You'd better explain quickly," Stenton rasped warningly.

"Look hard, Stenton," said the stranger quietly.

Stenton's finger tightened on the trigger of the gun in his hand. He wet dry lips with a tongue that seemed swollen. His eyes bulged from his sockets

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as he stared at this intruder. Then, suddenly, his gun hand wavered and he stepped back.

"No!" Stenton grated.

"Yes," said the stranger. "I look exactly like you, don't I, Stenton? In fact, were you wearing these clothes it would be impossible to tell the difference between us. I look so much like you, Stenton, that I am, in part, *actually you!*"

Stenton was unable to speak. Again he ran his swollen tongue over his dried lips. His eyes were growing fever bright, his entire body beginning to tremble.

The stranger suddenly took his hands from his pockets. In his right hand was a paper on which something had been written.

"This tells it all," the stranger said, holding forth the paper. "I signed it, since our signatures would be identical. It's your full confession, Stenton. It will clear up old Frawley's murder, won't it, Stenton?"

Stenton at last found voice.

"Damn you," he grated. "You'll never force me to do that. I'll—"

The stranger cut him off. "You can't escape me, Stenton. You tried, just before you killed him. You thought you got rid of me, but you hadn't. I'm back, Stenton, and now you must reckon with me."

Stenton's strangled, sobbing curse was lost in the smashing report of the gun in his hand. He fired once, straight at the skull of the stranger, and the room shook with the ringing of the report.

But the stranger didn't fall. Even though the shot must have smashed into the side of his skull, even though the bullet must have torn through his brain, the stranger didn't fall.

Stenton fell instead, the smoking gun clattering from his hand to the polished floor. Stenton fell, with half the side of his head blown away by the bullet's smashing force.

The stranger watched Stenton fall. Then he stepped over to the body and placed the paper beside it. . . .

THE newspapers were full of it. Stenton's suicide was front page news in itself. But the signed confession found beside his body, the confession to the murder of Richard Frawley, made it more than sensational.

The explanation of his action made it clear just why, when he'd never have been suspected, Stenton had taken that way out. The explanation was found in the last line of his confession, just above his signature.

My conscience," Stenton had stated in that last line, *"would never let me rest."*

No one, of course, ever imagined that that last line was anything more than a figure of speech.

THE END.

THE CYCLOTRON VERSUS CANCER

IT APPEARS as if the famous cyclotron may enter the fight against cancer. According to J. C. Larkin and R. S. Stone, University of California, 61 of 129 patients facing sure death due to advanced stages of cancer may have recovered completely after being subjected to the beams of a 225 ton cyclotron.

During the process of atom smashing, beams of subatomic particles called neutrons are ejected. A neutron is an important constituent of the atomic nucleus. All neutrons have a relative mass of 1 and bear neither a positive nor negative charge. It has been proposed that a neutron consists of a protron stripped of its position.

When these neutron beams are permitted to act upon cancerous tissues, the cancerous tissue seems to undergo a remarkable shrinkage, and the pleasant part of this is that the patient experiences no pain or discomfort. The best results have been obtained in working with cancers of the mouth, throat, and primary cancers of the prostate gland.

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The tread of elephant feet brought back Rome's ancient enemy and led to final defeat for the Nazis

The Nazi lines crumbled and broke under the onslaught

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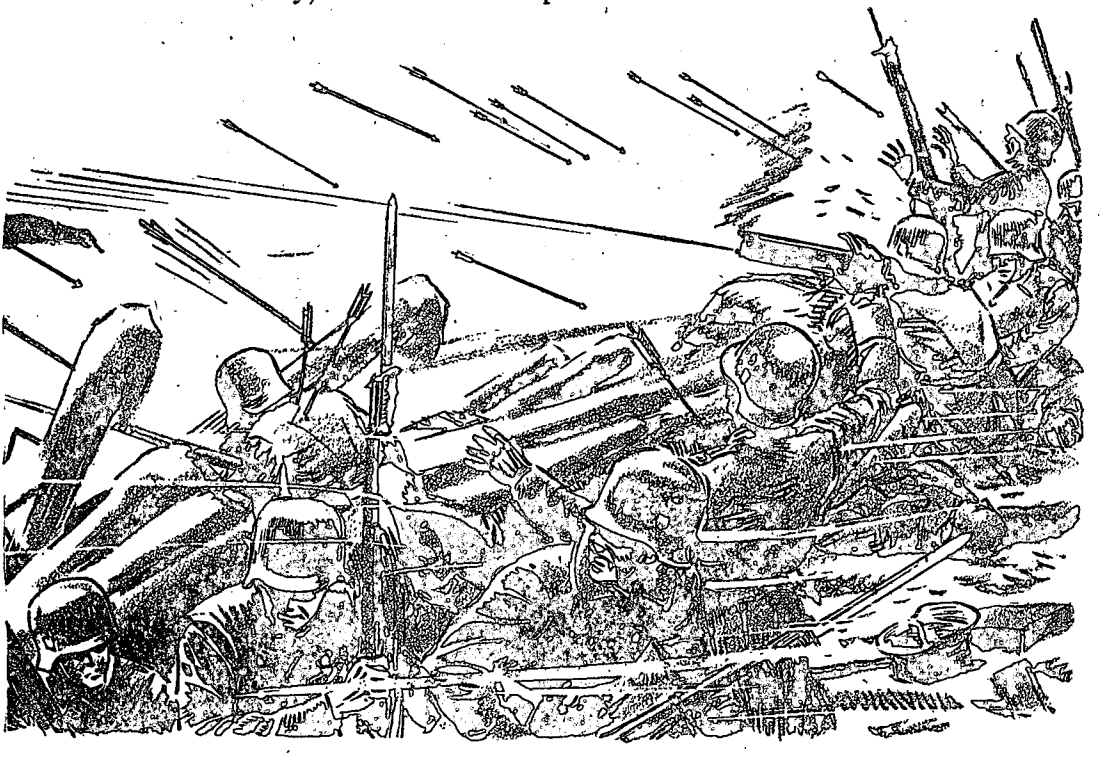
LOST LEGIONS OF CARTHAGE

By Leroy Yerxa

IT WAS night, and snow swirled downward in white blankets from the cliffs above the Nazi camp. The pass itself was quiet, except for the cutting wind that howled through the tents.

Three guards had been stationed where they could look down over the warm, moonlighted Valley of Duric. Frederick Gothaven looked away from the fire suddenly, drew his head deeper into the frayed coat and stared moodily at his companion. The third man was pacing up and down a few feet away. The fire light glistened on the cold barrel of his rifle and his frozen boots clumped up and down mechanically as he walked.

"Hans, I'm tired of sitting on ice each night while that pig-faced von Ristoben sleeps in his tank under warm blankets."



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Hans Welkin shot a frightened look about them in the darkness.

"You must not talk that way about our leader," he whispered. "Von Ristoben would punish you if he heard . . ."

He drew a stiff finger across his throat from ear to ear and made a bitter face.

The pacing guard came toward them from the darkness. He was cursing the cold softly. Fog poured from his mouth as he breathed.

It happened then—suddenly.

"Zinnng!"

A look of horror crossed the guard's face and he pitched forward into the soft snow. A long, feathered shaft stood upright in his back.

Slow, stolid Hans Welkin arose and went toward him. Hans was young. He thought only of his comrade lying there with the arrow in his back.

"Zinnng!"

The shrill twang of a bowstring sounded again, closer. Welkin clutched his heart. A third arrow whizzed from the side of the cliff and pinned his hand to his chest. With a frightened sob he went down.

Frederick Gothaven had thought much faster than the others. With a wild lunge he threw himself out of the fire light and rolled over and over in the snow, then lay still. No sound but the moans of the dying men came to him. He started to crawl toward the tank of General von Ristoben.

The pass was silent again. Gothaven wanted to cry out an alarm. The thought of those arrows finding him here on his belly aroused an animal fear inside him.

Somewhere on the edge of a camp a horse whinnied softly. There were no horses here—only tanks and trucks. The sound sent him forward swiftly.

He reached the tank. His fingers closed over the ice on the tread. His heart was pounding as though it would break through the heavy coat that covered him. Frederick Gothaven started to pull himself upward, hugging the hard steel. The moon broke through ragged clouds above the pass, pinning him in its light, unable to move.

"Zinnng!"

A wooden shaft sank into his side and he toppled backward into the snow. Pain clouded his eyes as he tried to jerk the arrow out. He dared not shout for help lest they know he was alive and shoot again. He lay still finally, panting with fear.

The first row of horsemen cantered over the ridge, lances gleaming in the moonlight. These were strange men with high crowned helmets and sheathed swords. There were no saddles on the horses that advanced in a long, even line straight toward the group of dark tents. Animal skins covered the broad sweating flanks of the animals and their hoofs sent streamers of snow flying into the air.

Hot blood flashed through Frederick Gothaven's body and he fainted. General Jon von Ristoben slept for several minutes after Gothaven had fallen. Finally awakened by the screams of his own men, the puffy-eyed Nazi lifted himself from the turret of the tank. He died ingloriously in his underwear, an eight foot spear buried in his thick Teutonic skull.

CHAPTER II

Death's Calling Card

REX WALLACE, foreign correspondent of the *Chicago Blade* entered the war-crushed city of Milan, late in August. "Snub" Edwards, his photographer, flew with him direct from Tunis. They winged in by army plane high above the occupied city of Rome

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and reached Milan just before sundown.

Wallace had walked half way across Libya to be with the American forces when they entered Tunis. He had dropped with the paratroops on Sicily, and typed a cable dispatch on Mussolini's big desk when Rome fell under Allied control. Rex Wallace's tall, awkward body, slightly flattened nose and thatch of red hair said little for his ability. Yet he had scooped every paper in the States with his story of the Italian dictator's downfall.

Wallace had been able to cable increasingly good reports of the Allied fighters since early spring. The same troops and bombers that had mopped up Tunis and North Africa, were now sweeping unchecked into Northern Italy. In three months the Italian people had overthrown paunchy Mussolini and harried the Gestapo into retreating from the warm plains.

Sicily had been captured and the Italian fleet destroyed. Rome went down under R.A.F. block-busters and the German High Command retreated into the Swiss and French Alps. With the Allied Command established in Milan, bombers roared from the flat countryside on their mission to Berlin. Covered with a haze of war smoke, Milan itself died at the hands of the retreating Nazis. The Cathedral of Milan was leveled to the ground.

With Russia pounding through Poland, and England keeping Hitler's youngest troops busy in France, the final round was ready to start. Rex Wallace wanted the story and pix of the first American boys to enter the German Reich.

As Rex Wallace watched the pilot prepare for a landing, he fully realized the preparations in the making for the Allied push. United Nations' trucks, planes and heavy equipment were everywhere. From the south across flat, fertile plains, long lines of trucks jammed the roads and lost themselves on the horizon. The city itself was alive with activity.

The plane hit the runway, kicked up lightly and settled down again for the run to the far end of the field.

"Seems good to be on the ground again," Wallace said.

Snub Edwards stared at him through his good left eye, scratched the heavy blond stubble on his chin and groaned.

"The good earth, huh? After crawling over every inch of North Africa I'm fed up with hard ground. Give me a cloud to sit on any day in the week."

Wallace unfolded slowly and stood up. He had to hunch forward and bow his head under the low roof of the cabin.

"If we get out of this mess *without* sitting on a cloud, we'll be lucky."

The plane stopped, twisted around and the motors gunned up and died.

"Any Italian babes left in this place?" Snub asked. "I need my brow soothed or something."

Wallace was looking for someone on the field.

"Better ask Hitler," he answered bitterly. *He's* taken care of that department."

THEY waited as the pilot handed down two small bags, a typewriter case and Snub's photography equipment. A small car dashed out from the hangar and bumped to a stop beside the plane. The soldier who drove had a clean face and a grin that stamped Middle West all over him.

He poked his head out the open window.

"You're Rex Wallace, I take it?"

"Right!"

The driver waited until the luggage

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had been stored in the rear seat.

"The General sent for you," he said as they climbed in. "You're to see him at once."

A low whistle escaped Wallace's lips. Snub winked at him wisely.

"Looks like big time stuff again," Snub offered. "No more front line, I hope. I'm getting tender."

He didn't look it. Snub Edwards had arms and fists that were twice their necessary proportions. Anything he could see with that one good eye would go down once he battered at it long enough.

Wallace took a cigarette from his pack, gave one to Snub and passed the remaining smokes to the soldier.

"Where you from?" he asked.

"Chicago," the boy answered. "I got a date in Berlin now, and I'll be there long enough to settle a lot of things."

They drew up before an ornate office building. Half of it had been bombed to dust and the remainder was stacked to the second floor with a wall of sand bags.

"Right through the front door," the driver said. "And thanks a lot for the cigarettes."

Wallace left Snub with the luggage and entered the main lobby. He leaned his ungainly weight over the desk in the hall and a staff officer arose and took his hand.

"Rex Wallace," the correspondent said. "General John Lathers sent for me."

"Pleased to meet you, Wallace. My name's Saunders. Heard about your work in Tunis. Lathers is waiting."

"Thanks," Wallace said.

They went together down the long hall and Saunders stopped before a plate glass door. He knocked softly.

"Come in." The voice beyond the door was low and crisp. Saunders held the door open.

"Rex Wallace is here, General," he said.

Lathers bounded out of his chair and rounded the desk hurriedly.

"Rex! Damn it, man, but it's good to see you."

Lathers was a small man, his service shirt open at the throat, sleeves rolled. Without the wealth of gray hair, he would have passed as a smoothly shaven boy of twenty-five. His actual age was a question but the service listed him as forty-five.

Wallace heard the door behind him close and he took Lathers' hand firmly. They stood grinning at each other.

"I got your message in Tunis," Wallace said awkwardly. "I won't pretend I'm not flattered by this attention. You've been very kind in the past, but . . ."

Lathers waved his hand impatiently.

"Forget the General to the Reporter stuff, Rex," he begged. "There was a time I'd have thrown you out of Africa if I could have found you. You've done some fine work since then. I need you."

Wallace leaned forward eagerly.

"The big job?" he asked. "Is it about ready to start?"

LATHERS sat down abruptly and the smile faded from his face.

"I'm afraid the Germans won't see us in Berlin this year," he said. "We've reached a deadlock."

Wallace stared at him. His oddly flattened nose quivered angrily.

"Our planes are pounding Germany apart," he said. "The Germans must be ripe for invasion."

Lathers drew a map from his desk.

"Look," he said, putting a finger down on the French Alps. "Hitler has holed in from the Ligurian Sea to the Adriatic."

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He traced a half circle around the top of Italy, through the entire ring of mountains. "It's going to take months to blast him out."

"But the Swiss and French," Wallace protested. "We counted on help."

Lathers sank back, a drawn expression on his face. The office was silent. Outside a heavy truck sank into mud, its engine roaring loudly as it pulled out and passed from hearing.

"You had a good reason for calling me here," Wallace said finally. "What can I do?"

Lathers stood up. He went to the window and looked outside. Finally he returned and placed a firm hand on Rex Wallace's shoulder.

"Rex, you and I have imagination. The work we do demands that we keep open minds. I wouldn't tell another man on earth what I'm going to tell you. They'd laugh me off the map."

"Wait a minute." To say that Wallace was surprised would be putting it mildly. General John L. Lathers was a hard-headed fighter. Men simply didn't laugh, regardless of what he said. "It's not that bad, I'm sure."

"Wait until you hear me out," Lathers urged. "It started last week. A small patrol of my men were found dead just south of the St. Bernard Pass. Six ski patrol men were found with spears driven into their bodies. At first I thought the Germans . . ."

"Hold it," Wallace begged. "Did you say *spears?*"

Lathers nodded grimly.

"I told you you'd have a chance to exercise imagination. Only a few men know of this. They've been told to forget it. The spears were delivered to me. They are stout poles with pointed, bronze heads. Rex, unless the Nazis are trying to frighten us with something new they've cooked up, I'm afraid I have no explanation."

"It sounds as though that were the case," Wallace admitted slowly.

Lathers chuckled.

"I disproved *that* theory also," he answered. "We've got a German prisoner here. He's in the hospital at present. The boy, Frederick Gothaven he calls himself, is suffering from an arrow wound in the right side."

Wallace stood up quickly.

"I don't get it," he confessed. "Bows and arrows, spears—what next?"

"Gothaven was picked up in the foothills of the French Alps," Lathers went on.

"He had crawled the better part of ten miles on his stomach. He was so badly frightened that he was ready to tell everything he knew by the time we patched him up. He says his whole battalion was camped in a pass. That they were attacked by horsemen, and the entire battalion destroyed."

"But horsemen in the high Alps," Wallace objected. "It's fantastic."

Lathers nodded.

"Exactly," he agreed. "But we can't overlook the spears, and the arrow head we dug out of Gothaven's side. Something big is on the way, Rex, and I want you to find out what it is."

Wallace smiled.

"If I'm not careful," he admitted, "I'll be cabling stories to the *Blade* about mysterious horsemen who gallop among the Alps and kill men with bows and arrows. I can't do that."

"Not yet," Lathers answered dryly. "But I'm not so sure you won't before we're through with this thing. Rex, I've a perfect description of these men from the Nazi, Gothaven. They may be hill people, out to get loot from both sides. In any case, I want to find them and learn who the leader is. If they can wipe out the Nazis the way this German boy says they can, they'd do a

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lot of good for our side. What do you say?"

Wallace hesitated and Lathers went on.

"I can't send my own men. The army just doesn't go for these fairy tales. We don't have a chance to get through the mountains this fall unless . . ."

"Unless I get these mysterious spear throwers on our side?"

"That's it," Lathers agreed. "If they do exist and could coincide their attacks with ours we might break through one of the lower passes and get our heavy stuff where we can use it. That's the story, Rex. Will you try it?"

WALLACE went to the desk and opened the box that held Lathers' cigarettes. He lighted one thoughtfully, took a long drag.

"I want to be in on the big show," he said. "Take a crack at it."

"We haven't a chance of getting through another way," Lathers said. "If by any wild chance this boy Gothaven knows what he's talking about, you may be pretty much in the center of things from the start."

"This Frederick Gothaven," Wallace asked. "May I see him?"

Lathers frowned and the corners of his mouth turned down bitterly.

"I saved this until the last because I wanted you to say 'yes' before I frightened you," he answered. "Gothaven died last night. He was alone in his room. When the nurse went in at midnight she found this buried in his heart."

He drew from his pocket a short-bladed dagger. The handle was of horn, crudely wrapped with leather thongs. A small piece of parchment like paper still clung to the hilt. Wallace took the weapon, turned it in his hand and slipped the paper off the blade. The characters were Latin, written in laborious fashion.

"That none shall remain, to betray us."

Wallace looked up until his eyes, dark and smouldering, were on Lathers.

"I like a challenge," he said quietly. "If you'll provide transportation to Turin and proper credentials I'd like to spend a few days in the French Alps."

Lathers took his hand warmly.

"Just make sure you don't end up with that same message," he said, pointing at the dagger.

CHAPTER III

"None Shall Remain . . ."

PAPA BOISE, owner of the Alpine Chalet was not happy this morning. He had felt little of the war until now. As he anticipated, the Nazis had finally come through the pass and gone far back into the mountains to establish their camps. Their coming had been hurried, and Papa Boise's family was not harmed.

This morning, the old man stood on the level ground before the lodge, watching the valley below with a pair of aged binoculars. Fresh snow covered the ground and the sun was bright against it. His eyes ached from the glare and his heart pumped very hard.

He had not told his daughter, Frances, of what he had seen last night. Close to midnight he had heard voices at the back of the lodge. It had taken long minutes for him to gain enough courage to slip from his long night shirt and climb into heavy clothing. When he finally rounded the woodhouse the voices were gone. Fresh footprints and warm horse droppings were around the well.

Shivering from more than the cold,

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Papa Boise had returned to bed where he spent the remainder of the night without closing his eyes.

Returning the glass to his pocket, the old man went toward the kitchen. He saw Frances drawing water from the well and thanked the Saints for sending more snow to cover the footprints. He prayed silently that the men would not return.

"Papa! Papa!" It was Frances, her voice alive with sudden excitement. "There are men coming down the road."

Papa Boise ran to the kitchen and brought out his old Swiss rifle. It was true. Two men were laboring slowly through deep snow in the road. The tall one carried a heavy pack. The short man behind him carried two rifles and a heavy-looking black box. The man in front had bright red hair and a misshapen nose.

Rex Wallace reached the top of the hill and started to cross the flat ground toward the alpine lodge. The sun blinded him until an old man's voice rang out.

"Halt! Who are you? What do you want here."

Wallace stopped short, shading his eyes.

"The old guy's got a rifle," Snub Edwards warned.

Wallace kept on walking.

"We're Americans," he sang out. "Looking for a place to stay a few nights. The people in the village said you'd put us up."

Papa Boise dropped his rifle and smiled. His gums were toothless and pink. The girl at his side, Wallace thought, couldn't be over twenty. She was comely and had bright red cheeks. A pail of water stood at her side.

"You are welcome to what we have," Papa Boise said and held out his hand. "We are lonely people here and very few come our way. This is my daughter, Frances."

Frances dipped in a little curtsy and smiled shyly. Her eyes met Wallace's, flashing and friendly.

"I am happy that you are here," she said simply.

Without further words, Papa Boise took the water pail, and turning his back on them, went toward the lodge.

"Let me carry that for you." Wallace took the heavy pail from him and they walked toward the door that led to the kitchen. Don't go to any trouble on my account. This is Snub Edwards."

"Papa Boise nodded toward the one-eyed Snub, and they went into the warm kitchen.

"Frances will prepare your room," Papa Boise said. "Meanwhile, you would like to eat?"

BEFORE nightfall, Rex Wallace knew about the Boise family. Mama Boise it seemed had been dead for many years. Since the war, they never entertained at the chalet. No one cared to ski in the Alps with machine guns hidden in every pass.

Late in the evening Frances led them to the second floor and held a lamp while they approved of the tiny room with the big feather bed. She stayed a little longer than necessary, watching Rex Wallace with round eyes as he drew two revolvers from under his coat and put them carefully by the bed.

"You look for trouble?" Her lips parted slightly and she retreated toward the door. "You may find it here. Papa saw the tracks of horses and men by the well last night. He did not tell me, but they were there under the fresh snow this morning."

"Horses?" Wallace tried to control his voice. "How many? Tell me

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about them."

The girl was confused.

"I have already said too much," she protested. "Papa would not like me to be so friendly with strangers. It is just that I like . . ."

She blushed prettily and ran away down the hall.

"Well I'll be damned," Snub Edwards said. "Looks like excitement already."

Wallace was silent for several minutes as he undressed by the light of the lamp. When they were at last in bed, he blew out the flame and lay stretched out on his back.

"From now on we'll look twice before we move," he said slowly. "I've a hunch those horses may get thirsty again."

Snub was already snoring at his side. Exhausted by the long day's climb, Wallace rolled on his side. Then, remembering the guns, he reached for them in the darkness and placed them close to him.

In the darkness beyond the chalet, a single sentry watched the room on the second floor. He stood knee deep in the snow, his horse standing with head down against the wind. The man had long hair that reached down to cover his eyes. He was dressed in the skin of an ox, and as the lamp-light flickered and went out, he thrust his thick, hairy arms high into the air in a prearranged signal.

Ten horsemen rode in single file down the tiny gulley behind the chalet. Spears trailed from their right hands, and their bodies were matted with snow.

Papa and Frances Boise were still in the kitchen when the mysterious horsemen came. They had no chance to cry out, but were overpowered and gagged with desperate speed. The column of horsemen then retreated as quietly as they had come, carrying two hostages. Where and why they were going, the frightened young girl and the humble old man could not guess.

In the door of the kitchen a short-bladed knife had been driven deep. A small note was attached to the handle, a message to others who were to come.

"That none shall remain to betray us."

CHAPTER IV

". . . to Betray Us"

REX WALLACE awakened refreshed and eager for the day ahead. He poked Snub not too gently in his thickly padded ribs and was rewarded with a sleepy grunt.

"I got a funny feeling," Snub said, rubbing his eyes, "that something's wrong around here. No heat, no breakfast in bed . . ."

Wallace winced as his bare feet struck the cold floor. He made quick work of dressing.

"They're probably sleeping late," he said. "The old man must be pretty feeble. As for Frances, she must get *plenty* of beauty sleep."

The kitchen, when they entered it, was cold and deserted. Dirty dishes were still stacked on the table.

"I still say there's something wrong," Snub insisted. "I got a sixth sense or somethin'. It ain't like the girl to leave a mess like this."

Wallace *was* worried in spite of himself. He glanced at his watch. It was already ten o'clock. The pair should have been about hours ago.

"Knock at all the doors along the lower hall," he said. "I'm going to take a look outside."

He pushed the door open, saw the tracks in the snow and turned about quickly.

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"Snub!" His voice was hard. "Get out here on the double!"

The one-eyed photographer came on the run.

The snow in the yard showed many hoof prints. They led in a straight line toward the gully behind the chalet and into the mountain beyond. When Wallace turned again to Snub Edwards, there was smouldering hatred in the reporter's gray eyes.

"The same gang of killers," he said. "Why they kidnaped the girl and the old man I can't guess, but, if necessary, I'll cross the Alps on foot to find out."

Twenty minutes later they were packed. They had eaten hurriedly. Wallace led the way across the open spot behind the chalet and up the ravine. The tracks were still clearly visible and the sun was bright and warm above.

"Crack!"

Wallace's hand on Snub's shoulder halted the little man suddenly.

"Wait!"

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The sharp echo of rifle shots came down from the hills. A motor roared into action and far away voices rose in anger and fear.

"Back to the lodge," Wallace said quickly. "There's an armed force up there. They must be fighting it out. We'd better lay low until the excitement dies down."

They reached the door barely in time. A huge truck twisted down the snow-drifted road and hurtled in a wide circle toward the chalet. Men were pouring from it before the engine stopped.

Wallace pushed Snub through the kitchen door hurriedly and followed after him.

"The second floor," he whispered. "There may be more of them."

THEY pounded up the stairs and ran into the room they had occupied the night before. Wallace had been right. Two more trucks followed the first. They were covered with canvas tarps and a huge swastika was painted on the side of each.

A loud command cut the air and they watched the Nazi officer striding from one truck to the next, supervising the unloading. Machine guns came down and were quickly assembled. Fog poured from the mouths of the soldiers as they worked. They were badly frightened. Hurried glances were thrown toward the road from which they had come.

Footsteps pounded on the lower floor.

"Quick! We've got to get into the attic. They're going to set up the guns in here."

Snub Edwards followed Wallace down the long hall. At the end of it there was a small door, half the size of a man. Wallace pushed it open and saw stairs leading upward.

"Get that chair!" He pointed to a huge leather affair half way down the hall. Men were already talking on the stairs below.

Snub carried the chair to the door. Hurriedly he followed Wallace through. With it almost closed, they were still able to draw the chair close enough to hide the panel.

The attic of the chalet was low and almost pitch black. A tiny window at the front of the house sent a small shaft of sunlight across the floor. Large piles of skis and snowshoes were at the far end.

Wallace knelt carefully and peered through the small window. He watched the last Nazi enter the house. From the sounds below, he knew they had assembled a machine gun in the bedroom he and Snub had slept in. Outside,

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the trucks were empty and deserted.

Ten minutes passed. Except for occasional low commands in the rooms below, there was silence. Wallace dared not move less they hear him and start searching for the attic door.

Then they came!

Not the American patrol he had expected. Not men who fought their way forward with rifles. Wallace clutched Snub's shoulders and pointed beyond the road.

Over the pass a straight line of horsemen galloped. They were the warriors that Frederick Gothaven had seen. The men with spears pointed toward the sun. Men who wore strange robes and sandals. Fighters from the past with hard, set faces. Faces of hardened killers who fought for the love of battle.

Rank after rank they came, spears upright. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands of them sweeping down upon the chalet with red banners waving and horses kicking and plunging in the snow.

The thought of these men being mowed down under Nazi machine gun fire sickened Wallace. He wanted to cry out a warning.

Then as low commands below told Rex Wallace that the guns were about to spit death, the oncoming troops broke into a wide formation. A splendid figure of a man rose in his saddle and brought his spear down until it pointed straight at the chalet.

"Charge with your pilums!"

The roar of his voice was drowned in the hoarse, eager battle cry that followed. As in a trance, Wallace was aware that the horsemen had spread out in groups and were closing in from every side. Horses reared on their hindquarters and spears came low for the throw. The air was suddenly shattered with thunderous sound.

THE sudden breaking of the formation caught the Nazi gunners off guard. They started firing wildly, but it was like a hunter who sees many birds at once and can hit none of them.

Then the air was full of hurtling spears. Windows crashed in and still they came. He heard the shouts and curses of the men below as, one by one, the guns were silenced.

"Dismount! Charge with gladius!"

The chalet seemed to quiver under the impact of the dismounted men as they came, wave on wave, with brandished swords. The halls and stairs shivered under their feet.

One by one the rooms below were quiet once more. Only the gruff voices of the warriors filtered up through the boards. Wallace looked at Snub. The photographer's face was pale, his teeth chattering.

"I hope to God they miss that door," Snub whispered. "Rex, I still can't believe . . ."

Wallace nodded.

"Thank the Lord they were fighting Nazis *this* time," he said. "They make every man their enemy."

Men were pouring from the house now and dragging their mounts from the milling throng. Several wounded warriors had been tied across the backs of their own horses. Discarded spears and equipment was collected carefully. They went as swiftly as they had come. All the Nazis were dead before they left. The armed legion had taken no prisoners to betray them.

"Let's get out of here." Snub arose to his knees. He felt violently ill.

"Wait!" Wallace saw the two men who came galloping back. They carried strung bows and rode side by side into the yard.

The arrows in those bows were tipped with flaming cloth.

"Down stairs, quick!" Wallace

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made a quick dash toward the ski pile in the corner. "The devils are going to burn the place to the ground."

Even as he spoke, twin thuds sounded on the dry shingles above. Smoke rushed downward and red flame darted into this dry attic. Arrows continued to shuttle through the air, into every part of the age-dried chalet.

CHAPTER V

Queen or Slave?

EVENTS of the past three hours had left Frances Boise filled with fear and yet with a new-born respect for her captors. Last night, when they had rushed into the kitchen and overpowered her and Papa Boise, it had been terrible. She had tried to cry out, felt a huge, hairy paw over her mouth and the cry had died in her throat. The trip through the night was cold and horrible.

Now, that the sun was shining once more, she felt better. She rode on the fur saddle in front of a tall young man with a red beard. His arm, brown and hard, had been around her waist as she slept. It remained, but during the night he had wrapped her carefully in a huge bear skin. Frightened and hungry, the girl was still excited about her adventure. What was to become of them she dared not guess but for the time being the sun was warm and Frances Boise felt safe.

Papa Boise cared only for the safety of his daughter. These, he had little doubt, were the same horsemen who had come to the chalet two nights before. Why had they kidnaped Frances and him?"

There were ten men in the group, riding single file up the steady incline of the switchback trail. Snow two feet deep had been packed down by hoofs of many horses. Papa Boise realized that wherever they went, there were many other warriors waiting.

"Halt!"

The young man who rode with Frances gave the command in a cool, hard voice.

"Look behind you," he said, "and you will know why you are with us."

The line of horses had turned about slowly. Frances looked down the side of the mountain. Many miles away in the clear morning air the tiny roof of the chalet was visible. A tiny pin prick of black against the white snow, it nestled at the base of the first pass.

As they looked, a puff of smoke drifted up and died in the sky. Bright flames burned like tiny candles.

"The chalet!" Papa Boise's voice was filled with alarm. "It is burning . . ."

With a sob he tried to break away. It was useless. Red Beard rode close, smiling at the old man.

"Be not alarmed," he said. "Our leader cautioned us that you were to be taken to safety. It was destined that your home should be destroyed. It is on the bloody battle ground of our forefathers."

Something in his voice made Frances Boise feel better. She watched the chalet below with tears in her eyes. It had been their home, their only possession. It burned quickly and died to a black smudge against the snow. She wondered with mixed emotions what had become of the two men who had come the night before.

"March!" Red Beard gave the command and they resumed the endless trip up the mountain. Snow started to blow down from the steeper slopes above and white drifts began to make slow work of the ride up the trail.

THE steady *clack-clack* of the horses' hoofs against frozen ground made

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Frances Boise drowsy. Hiding herself within the robe she tried to escape the stinging snow. Even now the chalet was a long distance from her mind. In youth, high adventure mends one's heart quickly.

"Hoooo!"

She sat up suddenly, startled by the faint cry that came on the howling wind.

Red Beard tensed in the saddle.

"Hoooo!" he shouted. "It is Zeratin returning from the pass."

The cry came closer.

"Approach slowly, Zeratin, that we may see."

A small band of men came down the trail on foot. They were spread fanwise and each held a bent bow. The bowstrings went limp and arrows were returned to their quivers. A stout, ruddy-faced man came forward with outstretched arms. Zeratin, the Red Beard, lowered the girl from the saddle and dropped to his own feet. He grabbed the red-faced bowman about the waist and they embraced with heavy laughter.

"I see that you have performed your mission," the stout man said. "It is good that the innocent did not suffer."

"It is good," Zeratin answered. "Now, Rudger, what of the Pilums?"

Rudger, the guard, grinned.

"You saw the fire in the valley?"

Zeratin nodded.

"That is your answer. The legion of Pilums sent that signal that another troop of Romans has been destroyed."

"Good," Zeratin answered. "And now to the valley with our guests before they feel the sharp teeth of the blizzard."

The men were dismounting. The guards had taken the horses away toward a huge cave in the side of the hill. Try as she might, Frances Boise could make nothing of the strange expressions she heard around her.

Pilums? Romans?

Pilums were spears. It was an old Latin name. It was clear that their chalet had been burned as a signal that these men had killed a troop of Romans. Yet, there were no Italians in the valley who were fighting. She shook her head in bewilderment.

At Zeratin's side she trudged through the snow toward the opening in the cliff. They reached it and sunlight came from the other side.

Zeratin led the way through the great rock opening. They came out on an open ledge. It was warm and green in the valley below. No snow touched the place, or if it did, the warmth of the enclosed pit melted it before it could touch the ground.

With pounding heart she looked away to the far length of the valley. The men, realizing her wonderment, stood quietly as she drank in the beauty of the scene. Tiny green trees scattered on a lawn of lush green grass. Long rows of brightly striped tents spread like beach cabanas in the sun. At the far end, a legion of horsemen darted about in drill practice.

THE valley was a vast army camp, filled with men who were trained and ready at a moment's notice. Yet such an army she had never seen before. It was like a dream from the ancient Swiss history book she had studied as a girl. And to make her dream complete, a troop of ponderous, swinging beasts came up suddenly on the trail they were to descend.

Elephants! Here in the high Alps, lost between mountains of snow, the line of huge beasts passed them on the trail toward the outside world. The men on their backs were grim-faced. White robes covered their black-skinned bodies and their words

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were the strange, guttural talk of African Berbers.

"Come," Zeratin ordered. "We go down now. I am sorry the woman cannot ride. Here, women are as slaves until such time as the Leader wills otherwise."

Papa Boise's eyes were grim.

"My daughter will ride," he said. "I will walk in her place."

The elephant troop had swung around in the cavern above and was returning. Zeratin, the Red Beard, never wavered. He knew what could be done here and his authority was limited though his heart was not. When he spoke to Papa Boise, his words were clipped, almost cruel.

"You are not in command. Certain rules exist that are not to be broken. The distance is short and should the girl ride into our camp her life with us would be most unpleasant. She must walk."

Papa Boise started to say something but the look in his daughter's eyes stopped him. Silently he allowed himself to be swung aloft to the platform on the elephant's broad back. The others did likewise. At a grunted command the strange beasts swayed downward toward the valley.

Silent and bewildered, Frances Boise followed on foot.

CHAPTER VI

Rudger Strings His Bow

REX WALLACE knew the chalet wouldn't last more than fifteen minutes. While Snub Edwards dashed madly down the attic stairs, he took a last look from the tiny attic window. The bowmen who had started the blaze were already riding swiftly from the yard. The room was filled with dense smoke. Choking, Wallace took a handkerchief from his pocket and tied it around his face. He went toward the pile of skis quickly, scooped up an armload of them and raced down the stairs. Snub was at the lower door.

"Thought you passed out," Snub choked. "Let's get out of here."

Flames were crackling from all parts of the lodge now. Smoke rolled up from the lounge below.

"Get these skis down and out front." Wallace passed the heavy load to the smaller man. "Stand below the bedroom window. I'm going after one of those machine guns."

Without waiting for a reply he ran along the hall. The smoke was lighter here. He opened the door. Three Nazi soldiers sprawled on the floor. One had a spear through his face. The other two lay face down, bloody holes torn in their backs. The machine gun stood on its tripod by the window. They had little chance to use it. Several steel boxes of ammunition lay near the gun. With the door behind him closed there was no smoke in the room. Wallace prayed that Snub would get clear with his load.

Snatching the heavy blanket off the bed he started tearing it into long strips. In a few moments he had a long, heavy wool rope. He tied it carefully about the base of the gun, lifted it and heaved it over the window sill.

Snub dashed into the yard below.

"Hurry up," he shouted above the crackling flames. "There's a ton of ammunition in the kitchen. When the flame hits it . . ."

"Shut up and catch," Wallace shouted "Get the gun and the skis away from the building. I'll be down."

He lowered the gun quickly and saw Snub struggling with it across the yard.

"Stand clear!"

He started tossing ammunition boxes from the window and heard them strike

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the snow. No explosion resulted. Wallace climbed to the sill himself. The roof sloped downward for twenty feet to its edge. With a quick push he started to slide along the smooth shingles, saw the ground bounce up suddenly as his knees flexed and hit hard. He rolled over and over to break the fall.

Snub had already carried the last box across the yard and into the ditch. They dropped into the small gully and waited, lying close to the ground. The chalet was ablaze to the roof now. Flames licked along the dry shingles and over the logs of the kitchen.

A moment of intense silence and then the morning was torn wide open by the explosion. Logs flew into the air as powder met flame.

"Boom!"

HUGGING the ground, Wallace hoped none of the flaming wood would come their way. He relaxed suddenly, taking a cautious look back at the clearing. The chalet was gone—blown to the sky by the explosion. He stood up.

"Can't waste time," he said quickly. "No telling how many more Nazis are on their way here. That fire may draw everyone within miles."

Snub grinned. His face was black with smoke.

"You wouldn't mind telling me where we're headed for?"

Wallace, grim and unsmiling, started lacing together three pairs of the skis he had rescued from the attic.

"I don't know," he admitted. "Our horse-riding friends did a nice job of those Nazis but I'm still settling our account with them. We're going to haul our little pet into the hills and find Frances Boise and her father."

He patted the muzzle of the machine gun lovingly.

"Remember how much luck the Nazis had with those things," Snub cautioned.

Wallace was already mounting the gun on top of the row of lashed skis. He had rigged a sort of toboggan with the gun upright, ready to fire, on top of it.

"I'll take a chance," he said. "Besides, I think I know a trick or two about mountain fighting that the Nazis don't. Can you manage on skis?"

Snub shook his head.

"Sorry," he admitted. "I'll walk now and ride down later with the gun."

Wallace slipped the last pair of skis under his feet and strapped them on tightly.

"Sounds all right," he admitted. "That gives us a mobile unit ready for action on the fly."

Together they started up the slow incline behind the destroyed chalet. The hoofprints were still deep and clear where the captors of Frances Boise and her father had passed the night before.

The climb was long and the heavy snow hindered their own progress. For twelve terrible hours. Rex Wallace struggled onward up the switchback trail. Three times they had rested, but finding no relief from the long grilling pull upward, Wallace had submitted to riding on the makeshift toboggan. They took turns, first riding and then dragging each other onward toward the sky.

Nothing would be gained by an accurate account of the hardships they suffered. Suffice to say that as night darkened the snow and the moon came across the ridges of flying white particles, Rex Wallace was more exhausted than he had ever been before. The long day had blinded both men until their eyes were red, swollen slits. Their arms ached and yet Wallace wouldn't leave the gun. It was their one margin of safety in this strange world.

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It may have been the howling wind that raged downward, choking the breath from their lungs. It may have been utter exhaustion that caused Rex Wallace to ignore the voice that floated down on the night wind.

"Hooo!"

Rudger, the guard, stood alone in the pass that led to the valley. The two strangers who staggered up from below, dragged behind them an object that was strange and yet sinister to his sharp eyes.

"Hooo!"

He called again, louder. As wise and relentless as was Rudger, he had no wish to bury his feathered shafts in the necks of friends. But now he was sure they were not friends. One of the men looked up at him through the night. He raised an arm and fell forward in the snow.

The other, shouting something that signified fright although the message itself was lost in the wind, threw himself on the sled behind the strange object. Suddenly fire seemed to spit through the night and the rocks behind Rudger shattered and fell away.

The tall, husky guard had no choice. Stringing his bow with sudden speed he leveled his eye across the string and let the arrow fly.

"Twang!"

The song of death was gentle, sighing into the wind. The man behind the fire-machine slumped forward and the fire ceased to come. A dark figure appeared near the wall behind Rudger, spoke to him.

"We heard the alarm."

Rudger dropped the bow to his side and pointed proudly at the target on the sled.

"In the shoulder, and at sixty paces," he said. "Be careful of the one in the snow. He may be playing a trick to lure you close."

CHAPTER VII

The Dagger of Alixe

ALTHOUGH Frances Boise had been in the strange valley for several hours, she knew little of the people who lived here. The elephant caravan had been greeted warmly as it wound down the long line of bright tents that seemed to make up a sort of main street to the camp. She had stood alone as warriors of every age and color dashed from their quarters and circled Zeratin.

"What tidings of the outside?"

"The Romans? Are they dying like the dogs they are?"

"The old man? Where is he from?"

Their cries filled the dusty warmth of the street and Frances stood alone on the outside of the circle. At last Zeratin seemed to have answered their questions well. The crowd faded swiftly and the elephants were led away. In the distance men were singing a war song. The sound came to her through the trees.

Zeratin and her father came toward her. Papa Boise was exhausted and his face was a mask of anger. Zeratin seemed in high good spirits. A smile crossed his face as he came close to her.

"I am sorry that you have been forced to enter our camp so humbly," he told her. "You see, there are few women here . . . none so lovely as you."

He stood before her, a frankly appraising smile on his lips.

"The others have earned their place with our army by serving us well. It is my hope that you can do likewise, winning your place among the higher caste."

Her face was suddenly flaming red.

"Then, until I win my place, as you put it, I can consider myself a slave?"

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Zeratin seemed taken aback by her show of temper.

"Is that so difficult?" he asked. "Our camp is warm and safe. The living here is good. You will be treated with respect. When our Leader summons you to his tent you may consider yourself one of us. Until then . . ."

He lifted his arm, motioning someone from the shadows of a large tent nearby. A young girl came toward them, her body swathed in coarse linen, her face hidden by a long veil. She bowed low before Red Beard.

"The master wishes?"

"Take this girl to your tent," Zeratin ordered abruptly. "She, like you, awaits the Leader. See that she is properly clothed and treated well."

Before Frances could protest, Zeratin turned on his heel and was gone. Two warriors went behind him, leading Papa Boise between them. With a shrug, Frances turned to the slave girl.

"I'm ready," she said. "Lead on."

The slave girl looked at her curiously. Her black eyes, the only features visible above the veil, seemed to cut through Frances.

"You are a friend of Zeratin?"

Something about the touch of sarcasm in her voice acted as a sharp warning to Frances Boise. Her eyes narrowed slightly.

"I have no friend here," she said sharply. "I was captured by the red-haired one. He's no friend of mine."

The slave girl seemed satisfied. It was with a softer voice she said:

"I am Alixe. You will come with me, please?"

"Thank you, Alixe," the new slave girl answered. "My name is Frances."

THE slave tent was devoid of life. A single row of clean, colorful beds cut across the center of the grassy floor. The place was arranged so that colorful curtains separated each bed. Pails of water and lines of tables seemed to take care of the dressing table problem. It was much like the dressing tent of a circus, but much larger, brighter, and warm with the warmth of the gentle valley breeze.

Under Alixe's instructions, Frances Boise removed her own coarse clothing and donned the gray, soft robe. She was told to cover her face with the same type of veil that Alixe wore.

"You are free to wander about at will during the afternoon hours," Alixe said. "We labor at the well, wash clothing in the river and do the work of the camp in the morning. We must all stay in the tents at night if we are to maintain our chances of being accepted in higher circles."

"This higher circle," Frances said cautiously. "What do you do when you get there?"

Alixe laughed lightly.

"You need not worry. Life here is not difficult. Men are not permitted to molest us. If a warrior desires you he must report to the Leader. You will then be taken before the Leader, your veil removed and you will become that warrior's wife."

"And you?" Frances Boise couldn't resist the question. "Is there a warrior who will ask for you?"

The eyes that stared at her over the veil became hard and relentless once more.

"Zeratin will ask for my hand during the coming moon," Alixe answered. "And I want it to be thus. Please remember that."

In spite of herself, Frances felt a quick blush warm her cheeks. She was thankful for the veil that hid it.

"I have no intentions of seeking your Zeratin," she said coldly. "So far as I'm concerned you can have him quite to yourself."

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"It is well!" From under the folds of her dress, Alixe whipped a tiny, jeweled dagger. She displayed it in the palm of her hand for and instant and returned it to its hiding place. "That will remind you of your promise!"

"Hooo! We have brought Romans!"

"Romans!" the cry went up outside the slave tent. "Rudger has brought us Romans."

The place was alive with shouted commands and footsteps pounding on the green alleys between the tents. Following Alixe, Frances Boise went quickly from the tent. She stood at the entrance as the line of elephants swung down the turf before her. Warriors had leaped from every tent and were marching behind the caravan. Rudger led the party.

It was on the broad back of one of the elephants that Frances saw something to make her heart cold. In a large, covered howdah, two men were seated. If Rex Wallace could see at all, he was too weak to realize that she was there. He leaned back in the box, his eyes almost closed, breathing heavily through parched lips. Snub Wallace sat beside him, his head tipped back. A white bandage covered one shoulder. On the elephant that followed, she recognized some of her father's skis. A machine gun, badly battered, was tossed in a jumbled heap beside the skis.

"To the cells!" The voices took up the shout until her ears were ringing. "To the prison, and when they have strength, toss them into the arena to prove they are cowardly Romans."

Frances turned slowly to the girl behind her. She tried to hide the confusion and fear in her heart.

"What—what will they do with those men?"

Alixe drew her head high.

"They are Romans," she said stiffly. "They will decide their own fate. A Roman is too cowardly to fight."

Then, Frances Boise thought hopelessly, all men outside the valley were called Romans. One point alone kept her from running toward the passing men. She would betray herself before these hordes. She had certain faith in the tall man with the flat nose. She was sure, even after an evening with him at the chalet, that if Romans were cowards, he could prove himself as brave as any man in this valley.

"Can we go about the camp now?" she asked Alixe quietly. "I would like to see everything."

"We shall see everything." Alixe passed her fingers lightly over her waist where the jeweled dagger was hidden. "But be sure that you see Zeratin only from a distance."

CHAPTER VIII

"You Will Fight and Die!"

REX WALLACE awakened suddenly, felt himself jolted from side to side and looked about in amazement. It seemed minutes ago that he had stood knee deep in the snow trying wildly to prevent that giant with the bow from shooting him down. The strain of the long mountain climb had been too much. He had fallen face down in the snow. After that he remembered nothing.

"Riding on the back of an elephant!"

The utter horror in Snub Edwards' voice brought Wallace around hurriedly. Then the bouncing and swaying were not in his imagination. Snub was at his side, wide eyed, a bandage around one shoulder.

Snub sat on the wooden seat, staring first at Wallace and then over the rim of the rude, high howdah and down at the throng of men who followed them.

"Elephants?"

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"Yeah, I know," Snub said. "It kinda got me for a minute, too. That big guy on the mountain beat me to the draw. He shot a stick of wood into my shoulder and then, just as nice as you please, took it out again and patched me up."

"But the elephants—this valley—it's like summer," Wallace tried to move, and realized that his hands and feet were tightly bound.

"Me, too," Snub went on. "It's all a part of a beautiful movie set. They shoot you and then they rub out the frostbite, tie you up and ride you around through Heaven on a circus elephant. It don't make sense."

Wallace wasn't sure. Perhaps it *did* make sense after all. He stared about in wonder. The procession of elephants was marching between long rows of tents. It was evident they were in a protected, grass-covered valley. The warriors had to come from somewhere. Perhaps, after all, he was lucky to have found them so soon.

The column stopped suddenly. From ahead, a huge figure of a man walked along the line of animals with a long pole in his hands with which he touched the beasts on their snouts. One by one they awkwardly knelt.

Wallace braced his feet against the front of the box as the animal they were on knelt in the dust. Rough hands reached over the railing and they were dragged out. Wallace was conscious of angry faces about him. He tried to stand up and was promptly tripped by his ropes, sprawling face down in the dust.

"*Hail the Roman heroes.*"

The voice of the giant Rudger boomed out and laughter greeted his words. The prisoners were dragged roughly across an open court and into a small, stone building and down long, stone stairs. Wallace tried to stay on his feet. Warriors pushed him headlong into a tiny cell. Snub, following him, fell heavily to the musty floor and rolled over.

"Nice greeting for heroes," he moaned. "If I ever get another chance with that gun . . ."

Wallace lay still until ponderous footsteps told him the others were leaving the building. Then he rolled to the wall and worked his way to his feet.

"Nice layout," he grunted. "No windows, no opening other than the door. I wonder what's next?"

THEY didn't have long to wait. The door swung open suddenly. A tall, heavy-set young man came in. He had come down the stairs silently. His face was covered with fierce red stubble and his hair was rusty red.

"My name is Zeratin," he announced calmly. "I am in charge here."

Rex Wallace grinned sourly.

"Take these damned ropes off and let's shake hands," he offered. "We're really not dangerous."

Zeratin crossed the cell in a stride and removed the thongs from Wallace's wrists.

"That remains to be seen," he said. "But, for the time being, you are helpless. We do not usually act so kindly toward Romans."

Wallace was already busy with Snub's bonds. At the mention of Romans he stood up quickly, a puzzled frown on his face.

"Romans? I don't get it. There's something wrong here. I'm an American. So is my friend."

For a moment Zeratin looked puzzled. Then he smiled.

"Your imagination is good, my friend. Fortunately you have chosen a race that does not exist. If you had said Teutonic, I might have believed."

He turned as though to leave, hesi-

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tated, then turned.

"However," he said, a gleam of humor in his eyes. "You will have a chance to prove your bravery."

"Am I supposed to ask how?" Wallace was more and more angered by the complete smugness of the man. "All right, how are we to prove how brave we are?"

Zeratin, in spite of himself, had become interested in this pair. They did not look or act like the cowardly men his legions had mowed down. He rather liked the tall one. He wasn't handsome, but the strong body, the flattened, grim face marked his prisoner apart from the others.

"I don't know why I say this," he answered slowly. "Unless . . . perhaps there *is* a chance that you are not of the Roman band. Our Leader will watch you this afternoon in the arena. There, two doors will be open for your escape. A lion guards either door. If a keen blade can save you from death, you will have that chance. Otherwise, you must die!"

CHAPTER IX

The Hatred of Alixe

FRANCES BOISE was desperate. More and more, after she saw Rex Wallace and his friend dragged from their elephant and thrown into prison, did she realize that something must be done to help them. What, she had no idea. She was alone, knowing only what the slave girl, Alixe, told her. And she could not trust Alixe.

It was from Alixe that she learned what the two men were to face. The Leader, that mysterious person whom Alixe spoke of only in hushed tones, had prepared a fitting end for any man who came here unwanted.

There lurked in the slave girl's mind a satanic pleasure in telling of torture and pain. She carefully went over the destiny already mapped out for Rex Wallace and Snub Edwards.

"Zeratin," Alixe said proudly, "is in charge of all prisoners. It is his duty to name the time they shall enter the arena. Lions are sent against them. No Roman has ever left alive. The Leader himself is always there to spare a brave man if he appears."

"But—but lions?" Frances tried to hide the fear in her voice. "Surely no man can fight such a beast and live."

Alixe nodded indifferently.

"You have guessed it," she agreed. "The lion always wins."

They went about the camp, keeping out of the way of warriors whose horses galloped about the green turf. Tents and more tents. The arena, a stone structure open to the sky, stood at the far end of the valley.

"I would like to see the arena," Frances said timidly. "Would it be possible for us to go in?"

Evidently Alixe was proud of her freedom about the camp.

"What silly whim is behind your request, I can't imagine." Her head straightened proudly. "But Zeratin will have no objection if *I* take you there. Come. . . ."

Together they entered the narrow doors and walked about the platform at the edge of the open enclosure.

"The Leader sits here." Alixe pointed to a raised section on the main balcony. "Through that door, and the other, the lion is released."

"Then there are only two of the beasts?"

"Only one," Alixe corrected. "No matter which door is opened, it is the same cage. The lion comes through either."

Then, seeing the puzzled expression on her companion's face, she went on.

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"It's a touch that Zeratin has added. The men are told that one door leads to safety and the other to death. It's laughable to see the expression on the fool's face when, after long deliberation, he opens the wrong door in either case."

Frances shivered.

"Let's go back," she urged. "I—I've seen enough."

As they descended the steps to the grass once more, she tried to think of some way to help the two men who faced this horrible death. *Zeratin!* He was the only one who could help her. She glanced at her companion. In some ways Alixe was lovely. She swung along gracefully, head high, eyes sharp and deeply black. The girl seemed of Greek descent but her age Frances could not guess. She remembered the wicked little dagger in the girl's belt.

She must see Zeratin at all costs. Alixe could be reckoned with later if that were necessary.

THE opportunity came sooner than she had hoped. Zeratin had not forgotten the lovely stranger who had rode with him through the long night. Many times during that ride, he had longed to press his lips against the lips of the sleeping girl. The restraint of a young nobleman had held him in check.

Now that the moon was high and the winds of the valley soft and warm in the silvery light, he sought out the tent of slaves. Frances was fortunate. Only a short time before, Alixe had left in a flare of temper, looking for the red-bearded warrior.

Frances Boise stood alone, worried and ill at ease. She leaned lightly against one of the ropes that supported the tent and gazed out toward the lip of the valley—and home.

"Does the lovely maiden long for her home?"

The words came from behind her, strong and vibrant with interest. She wheeled about with a little gasp, and recognized the man whom she had been hoping to see.

"It's Red Beard," she said. "Then you *are* sorry that I had to walk into the valley behind the elephants."

He stood a short distance from her, ill at ease with a woman who spoke so sincerely.

"More sorry than I can express," he admitted. "Unfortunately, it is the custom here. I had no choice."

Her lips tightened and above the veil that hid her face he saw her deep eyes flash angrily.

"It is also your custom to torture innocent men?"

For a moment he was taken aback by the sudden flare of temper. Then he sat down on the grass, and stared up at her.

"That again is a task I do not enjoy," he admitted. "The Leader has placed it within my duties. I suppose you know those men who came here today?"

She was suddenly cautious now.

"No more than other men." She sat down before him, arranging her skirt carefully. "They came to our chalet for the night. But, Zeratin, they mean no harm. They are not your enemies."

In spite of herself, a sob escaped her lips. This was her plea. If it went ignored, there was no appeal she could make to save the Americans from certain death.

Zeratin sprang to his feet. He was suddenly the tall, brutal warrior she had seen earlier that day.

"All men are our enemies." He spoke mechanically, as though he recited a vow. "We are in the country of the Romans and not even their spies, men or women, will sway our decisions."

The girl arose and stood before him. Her shoulders shook under the robe and

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tears were in her eyes. Still, the voice that whipped from under the veil was strong and defiant.

"Then if you are barbarians, kill. Go and kill every decent man in the mountains. The Romans, as you call them, are done fighting. They have been whipped to the last man. It's that beast Hitler we're after now. Go on—murder the men who carry on the fight for decency. Every one of them dead will make the world unsafe another day. Tell your Leader that!"

ZERATIN, the Red Beard, had never heard such words from a woman. Now, with this little slave facing him with clenched fists and tear-filled eyes, he knew no answer to her challenge.

These were strange words. A fool she must be to say the Romans were no longer fighting. The Leader must hear her words, must talk with the girl. Yes, and the Leader must also hear of the doubts that had arisen in his own mind during the past hours.

Zeratin was troubled that he could make no answer. Suddenly he turned on his heel and strode away. There was nothing about the broad back, the flashing helmet to betray his newborn doubts.

Frances Boise knew after Zeratin had left her that she would never get his support in freeing the Americans. She arose quietly and went down the line of tents toward the arena. If she could hide somewhere in the structure, perhaps she could be of some help in the morning.

Then she remembered the machine gun.

It had been tossed into the howdah on the elephant that walked behind the prisoners. She stopped in the shadow of the tents. If she were found here, away from the tent at night she would be punished. Yet she knew that other girls disobeyed the ruling and that even now Alixe might be somewhere in the camp with Zeratin. She'd have to take the chance.

A swift search located the stable tents at the far end of the small valley. A lighted lantern flickered through an open tent flap and inside she saw a row of huge beasts bedded for the night in deep hay. One man, an old warrior with his head tipped to one side in sleep, guarded the interior of the tent.

Outside, a row of howdahs were lined against the canvas. She went among them eagerly, looking hopefully into each. In the last one something dark and shining caught her eye. It was the gun. She knew little of such objects but from her knowledge of the German equipment she was sure the gun was intact.

The complete weapon was more than she could manage at one time. During the next half hour Frances Boise made three swift, torturous trips to the stone arena on the hill. At first she tried to drag the entire gun up the grass slopes. Finally, taking the barrel, the tripod and the ammunition boxes separately she managed to get them inside the dark entrance of the fort-like enclosure without being detected.

The arena was pitch black and deserted. Stumbling about in the lower tunnels, she tried hard to remember the location of the doors through which the lion would come. It was useless. The maze of underground passages seemed to lead nowhere. Finally she blundered through a small panel and found herself in the open arena. The sight of the stone seats rising deserted and cold startled her.

HURRIEDLY she dragged the parts of the gun down the long stairs. The layout of the lion cage was

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simple. There were three doors to it. One through which the beast could enter. The other two, one at each end, led directly to each door of the arena floor.

Hurriedly she lowered the bars at one end of the cage and put the gun together as she had found it. The ammunition boxes were hopeless belts that twisted in her bruised hands. She left them at last, hoping that the Americans could adjust them.

Leaving the cage, she started toward the opposite end and the other door to the arena. With the cage bared from each end, the Americans would be able to find the gun before . . .

Frances Boise stopped short, her heart pounding wildly.

Voices drifted down to her from above. There were footsteps on the steps.

She shrank back into the shadows, her eyes, wide and frightened, riveted to the still open end of the lion cage.

"But I tell you sometimes I wonder if the Leader is right . . ."

It was Zeratin. His voice was low and puzzled. Frances darted up the steps, saw a tiny lamp flicker above her and slipped back into the darkness. Zeratin and Alixe were coming down, arm in arm. The slave girl's eyes were on Red Beard.

"You must not question him." She had evidently been pleading with Zeratin for some time. "He is *always* right."

They passed her there in the darkness, and she held her breath until they had gone around the corner and toward the cage.

If they discovered the gun—the partly closed cage . . .

But the couple below were already returning. Trying to fight off the fear that held her here, alone in the dark, Frances Boise waited until they were close to the turn in the hall. Then she turned and ran silently up the steps. The Americans had but one chance for escape. If she were caught here now her plan would be discovered and they would die without an opportunity to defend themselves.

Trembling, she stopped a safe distance from the arena and looked back. The lamp-light appeared at the entrance, flickered and went out. She hurried toward the slave tent and crept in silently. Once under the silken covers of her bed, she buried her head in the pillows and sobbed as though her heart would break. Every muscle in her slim body quivered with the strain it had undergone.

Alixe entered sometime later. She paused at the bed where Frances Boise lay quietly. A smile of satisfaction touched her lips and her hand crept to the small dagger in her belt.

"You are safe, foolish slave girl," she whispered softly, "so long as Zeratin continues to smile at me . . ."

The dagger was in her hands, and she stroked the razor edge of it with a soft finger.

"But if he smiles at you again . . ."

CHAPTER X

Arena of Death

REX WALLACE entered the arena with a grim desire to die the hard way. He had no thought of escaping from these wild men. They were too strong for him to fight, but he meant to prove that he was not afraid. Ten mounted men had come to the stone prison when the sun was high.

"Here goes nothin'," Snub said as they were led into the open. "I'd like to have pictures of me fighting a lion."

The stout-hearted photographer didn't fool Wallace. They were both thinking the same thing. A man alone

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with a lion. Even the two of them had no chance.

The arena was filled with warriors. Zeratin himself escorted Wallace to the wall and pointed to the sand-covered pit.

"There are two doors," he shouted above the boisterous mob. "You are to open the one you wish. From one the beast will emerge. If you open the other, you are free men."

"Perhaps you don't remember the speech you gave us last night," Wallace said grimly. "About the same lion coming from either door?"

Zeratin grinned approvingly.

"This is the first time I have pushed a fighter into the arena," he answered. "Perhaps it was to give you a chance that I told you."

Snub Edwards stood at Wallace's side. He was trying very hard to swallow his adam's-apple.

"Do we fight with our bare hands?" he demanded.

Zeratin turned to the warrior behind him.

"Gladius!" he commanded.

The man whipped a short sword from his belt and reached for another from a second warrior. The swords were passed to Wallace and Edwards.

"You are armed," Zeratin said shortly. "Will you jump or be pushed?"

Wallace took one look at the sand-covered pit below, placed a firm hand on the rail and swung over it. From the circle of faces around him a roar of approval went up. Snub caught his breath and followed. They rolled over in the sand from the ten foot drop and stood up.

For the first time Wallace had a good look at the men who had come to see him die. There were perhaps two thousand men in the seats. Evidently this was a choice bit of action that only the elite were allowed to witness.

At the far end of the arena, a high rostrum stood apart from the rest. A throne-like chair was upon it. Colorful cloth covered this chair and striped canvas was spread above it. A man sat there, stiff and proud, his plumes of feathers waving in the breeze.

This then was the Leader. To Wallace he looked young. Hardly over twenty-five. In the shimmering sun Wallace fancied he could detect stubble on the man's face, a set smile on his lips. With a sarcastic grin Wallace bowed low and laid the sword on the sand, pointing toward the chair. Evidently he was doing the correct thing to impress these heathens, for a loud roar of approval cut the air once more and Snub followed Wallace's example.

There was no more time for stalling. Wallace studied Snub's grim face approvingly.

"Ready for the fireworks?" He tried to sound confident.

"As ready as I'll ever be." Snub said. "Open one of those doors and get ready to run."

WALLACE approached one of the doors warily. There was nothing to distinguish it from the other. Round, iron rings hung from them both.

"Here's to the lady or the tiger," he murmured and yanked one of them open. He jumped to one side and waited with sword raised. For a moment nothing happened. Then, in the darkness beyond the door, a deep-throated roar blasted the silence of the arena. The audience was quiet, waiting eagerly.

Wallace swallowed the dust that choked his throat. His eyes gradually pierced the gloom of the narrow passage. Then he saw, not the lion, but the heavy machine gun that he had

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dragged over the hills from the chalet. How it came here he did not question. Here was safety, not only from the lion but a means of escape from the strange warriors of Zeratin. He turned to Snub.

"Put on a show," he whispered. "Stall for time. I'm arranging this show so *we* can play the music."

Snub had seen the gun. He needed no prompting. Before the crowd could question the silence, they had both approached the silent doorway as though ten lions were about to leap from it. Wallace went inside slowly and the lion roared again, louder than before.

A sigh went up outside. The spectators evidently thought that he had died before he could put on a show. Snub dashed out of the door wildly, ran across the arena, slipped and slid on his face through the sand. This was a new development. As he arose slowly, brushing the sand carefully from his clothes, the crowd of toughened warriors roared with delight.

Apparently Snub was wild with fear. He ran back toward the door, pointed wildly to where Wallace had disappeared, and covered his eyes with his arm.

This was rare comedy indeed. The audience laughed in appreciation as Snub capered about the arena, as though trying to gain courage to dash after his lost companion. Then as he seemed about to run into the door with his sword pointing ahead of him, he would grow frightened and dash back across the thick sand. Each time he fell in a different position, scraping skin from his face to please the mob.

Wallace worked feverishly at the machine gun. From the sound, he knew that Snub was holding their attention. The beast in the cage behind him was stalking back and forth, its mouth opening each time it came near Wallace.

"Snub!"

The bruised clown appeared at the door at once, motioning in at Wallace, a set grin on his face.

"Open the other door and run."

Wallace pushed the weapon close to the entrance into the arena.

"The one with the lion?" Snub was wide eyed with fright.

"Open it," Wallace said evenly. "And get in here out of the way."

The audience felt the lull. They grew impatient. They wondered why the lion had not deserted the first body and dashed toward the living man. A few men stood up as Snub went toward the unopened door. He yanked the loop of steel, then turned and dashed back to join Wallace.

A shout of surprise went up around the walls. The lion strolled slowly into the sun, blinking against the light. A roar shook the arena, drowning out the shout of wonder from the stands. The beast turned, saw the two men in the dark passage and sprang through the air with his great red mouth open.

"Rat-tat-tat-tat."

Wallace tipped the trigger back gently, saving his ammunition.

The lion seemed to hesitate in mid-air. Its body lashed with pain as it sank to the blood-reddened sand. The smooth, sun-glinting hide rippled with agony and the animal was silent.

NOT so the audience. They could not understand what had happened but they had seen enough. Warriors vaulted the railing into the arena. They swept across the sand toward the men with the gun, shouting battle cries as they came.

"Steady," Wallace said. "Keep the belts clear. We'll have to work fast." The first warrior was very near to them, his spear poised.

"Rat-tat-tat!"

The man went down in a heap. The

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others stopped and backed away.

"Charge!" It was the voice of Zeratin, thundering over the walls. "They are but two. We are many."

The Red Beard dashed through the throng of hesitating men, his short sword drawn. Wallace tightened his grip on the trigger.

"Hold!"

The command was clear, decisive. Wallace saw the men halt as though turned to stone.

The man on the high rostrum had risen to his feet. He was hardly more than a boy. His tall, slim figure stood out like that of a god.

"Come forward, prisoners. I would talk with you."

Snub looked at Wallace, distrustfully.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Rex," he whispered. "It's a trick to get us away from the gun."

Wallace's eyes never wavered from the figure of the Leader.

"I don't think so," he answered slowly. "They'll get us as soon as our ammunition is gone, anyway. We'll take the chance. You cover me when I go out."

He stood up painfully, brushed the dirt from his ragged clothes and walked into the sunlight. Crossing the arena he stood with bared head, looking up at the man on the rostrum.

"You wanted to talk with me?"

The young man smiled down upon him. He turned to the warriors.

"Bring the man here where I can talk with him," he said. "I would not look down upon one who has given so fine an account of himself in the Arena of Death."

CHAPTER XI

The Dagger Strikes Home

TO FRANCES BOISE, hidden in the underbrush close to the arena, the sudden sharp, staccato burst of the machine gun was a wonderful sound. She had crouched close to the ground, listening to the sounds that came from inside the high walls. With mixed emotions she waited for the Americans to signal in some manner that they planned to escape. The gun spoke twice and then no more. For long minutes she waited, hoping that they would in some way get out of the stone enclosure. That she would be able to help them.

No one left the arena. It was silent now and she knew in her heart that they were dead. Trying to keep back her tears, she made her way along the wide avenue of tents and into the slave quarters.

As she was about to sink down onto the bed, a bright flash of color caught her eye from the road to the arena. From the tent flap she watched the horseman come down toward the tent city. As he came close she saw the thatch of red hair, the red beard. It was Zeratin.

Forgetting Alixe's warning, she dashed outside and stood in his path as he galloped toward her on his big charger. Zeratin reined his horse quickly and the brute reared to a sudden halt.

"You should be more careful." He slipped to the ground. His eyes were bright and excited. "I might have run you down."

"The Americans," she stammered. "The men in the arena. They are dead?"

Zeratin smiled and placed both his hands on her slender shoulders.

"No need to worry, now," he said gently. "Your men are safe."

"But—but I don't understand. I heard the gun. I thought . . ."

A questioning smile crossed his face. He held her firmly, looking straight into her eyes.

"You know how the weapon got

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where it was?"

She tried to hide her eyes from his but her blush betrayed her true emotions.

"You have no cause to fear," he went on. "A miracle has happened. Our Leader has been so impressed that he has spared their lives. I interested him in the story you told me. He asks that they appear in his tent within the hour. He is anxious to hear their full story."

Relief flooded through the girl and suddenly she wanted to cry. Before she could prevent it, Zeratin held her close, her head against his shoulder.

"You are the bravest girl I have ever known," he said simply. "I hope soon to ask you . . ."

He broke away quickly.

"But now I must be away. The Leader has asked that certain preparations be made."

Before she could stop him, Zeratin was once more on his horse and riding like the wind toward the head of the valley. The Americans were safe, then. More than that, her heart was beating wildly with Zeratin's words. There was a queer new warmth in Frances Boise's heart as she went toward the slave tent with firm, defiant steps.

Could she have seen the wild eyes of Alixe, watching her from behind the light wall of the tent, she would have hesitated. Alixe had stood close to the wall as Zeratin held the girl in his arms.

She put her small hand under the robe and slim fingers closed about the handle of the jeweled dagger. Frances Boise pushed the ten-flap aside and came in. The slave girl faced her across the width of turf. Alixe's eyes were swollen and red. Her lips were straight and the blood had drained from them.

"Fool! You have forgotten my warning?"

Frances stopped short, her eyes on the hidden hand beneath the robe.

"I—I'm sorry, Alixe. I had nothing to do with what happened."

Alixe came toward her slowly. Her eyes were pin points of wrath.

"You lifted your lips for his kisses," she hissed. "Zeratin is mine, do you understand? He is mine!"

She sprang like an agile cat, one hand seeking Frances's throat.

FRANCES BOISE fought back. Frantically, she sought to twist away from those clutching fingers, her lungs straining for breath. Instinctively, she brought her knee sharply up, felt it drive hard into the slave-girl's body.

Alixe gasped aloud under the agonizing impact, and staggered back, her savage grip broken. Before Frances could follow up her momentary advantage, however, the crazed girl had regained her balance and was rushing forward, the slender knife poised to strike.

"Swish."

A thick cudgel of wood twisted end over end through the air. A sickening thud sounded in the tent and Alixe dropped to her knees, both hands pressed to her head. Blood dripped from a wound in her temple as she withdrew her hands, staring at her reddened fingers with bewildered eyes. Then she slumped forward and was still.

Papa Boise gathered his daughter into his arms. "Are you all right, dear? Did she hurt you?"

Frances put her face against his shoulder and burst into tears. "She meant to kill me, Papa," she sobbed. "If you hadn't stopped her, she would have, too."

A sound outside the tent caused them to stiffen with alarm. The cloth flap was drawn back and Zeratin stood alone in the entrance. He looked questioningly at the old man and the girl. Then he saw Alixe, lying still on the

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grass. He came in, dropped to one knee beside her and placed a hand over her heart. At last he looked up and his eyes were cold and hard.

"She is dead," he said without emotion. "You have slain her."

Frances watched him for some sign. Some token of devotion that she felt sure was there behind those expressionless eyes. He returned the stare without saying more. With bowed head she followed Papa Boise from the tent. The old man held her hand tightly in his, like a child going to receive his just reward.

CHAPTER XII

Truce with the Past

THE court of the Leader was magnificent yet simple. A huge tent was pitched on the slope close to the arena. It rose above the remainder of the camp, bright awnings of gold and blue leading from it to the arena itself.

Wallace and Snub Edwards stood, ragged and dirty, before the central throne. The Leader looked down upon them with kindly eyes. He sat apart from the remainder of the chiefs who were grouped around the raised throne of wood and gold cloth.

For the first time, as he stood alone with Snub, Wallace had his chance to appraise the Leader. He was slim and brown, a light beard covering his smooth face. He sat with a hand on one knee, his very appearance commanding respect and silence from the men about him. His dress was simple. A metal helmet covered his head and a sharp, knife-like blade protruded from its top. He wore sandals and his waist-length tunic covered with squares of bright metal was half hidden beneath a flashing red robe.

His voice was that of one who has fought hard and successfully on many fields.

"Come nearer," he said, motioning them forward. "Sit here beside me. I want to talk with you."

Wallace advanced slowly and sat down. His body was sore and tired from the punishment it had taken.

"I would know your names," the Leader said in a friendly tone. "I was interested in what Zeratin, my second in command had to say of you."

"My name is Rex Wallace of the Chicago *Blade*. This is Snub Edwards, my photographer. We're in the Alps to cover the entrance of the Allied Armies into Germany."

The Leader looked puzzled. He turned to his men.

"Have any of you heard reports of armies with such names?"

Silence was his only answer. Heads shook slowly in negation. The Leader resumed his steady gaze.

"Zeratin tells me of strange things told to him by the new slave girl," he continued. "I ask that you give me information of your land. It may help me to understand something that has long puzzled me."

"The war," Wallace began, "is about over—or so we believe. The Italians are beaten. Hitler has withdrawn into the Alps. We had some hope of entering Germany before fall . . ."

The Leader held up a bewildered hand.

"Italians? Germans? These are strange names to us."

Wallace felt his jaw drop, got control of himself and started over.

"America, England, Russia and smaller nations are at war with the Axis. Is it possible that you know nothing of this?"

The Leader nodded.

"We know only of our own war with the Romans," he admitted. "It was

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for the purpose of exterminating them from the face of the earth that I, Hannibal, have come once more to the Alps."

WALLACE was staggered by the name. He glanced quickly at Snub. The warriors about them looked on silently.

"But you speak English . . ." faltered the reporter.

The Carthaginian smiled. "To us, all languages, all tongues, are as one. The reason that this is so goes back to the same source that has brought us back to imperial Rome after so many centuries. Does that sound so strange to you?"

"Not strange," Wallace admitted slowly. "No. Not when I think of it. It's—it's the only answer."

Hannibal nodded.

"It has been told," he said, "that I took my own life after the fall of Carthage. That I swallowed a vial of stuff in the eastern court of the King of Persia. That I say, is true. It was also written that I would once more return to the fields of Rome and fight again when the tread of elephants sounded once more in the pass of the Little St. Bernard."

Wallace realized that, through some quirk of the gods, Hannibal, leader of the Carthaginians and the enemy of ancient Rome, had returned. But there were no elephants in the Alps. That was fantastic.

Like a sudden light, the truth dawned upon him.

Nazi troops had been pushing through the St. Bernard Pass for weeks. Heavy equipment might cause the vibrations responsible for Hannibal's return.

Tanks! Yes, that was it! The heavy treads of tanks on the steep trails of the pass had brought back an army that had died fighting a cause older than Christianity. Hannibal had died, according to history, hundreds of years before Christ was born.

He faced the warrior with sudden relief, hoping against hope that he might plead his cause.

"I am going to talk to you for a time," he said awkwardly. "I have some things to say that will sound as wildly impossible as what you have just said seems to me. I would rather we talk alone. When I have finished you may tell your men what you wish. I will promise to tell you only the truth."

Hannibal of Carthage hesitated. Perhaps the honest, fearless eyes, the friendly face of the man before him convinced this warrior from the past that Wallace was sincere. With a motion of his arm he sent the men from the tent. When the last of them was gone, Wallace leaned forward.

"It was not the rumble of elephants that awakened you once more," he said. "It was the retreating tanks of an outlaw nation who are throwing our people into slavery."

Together, three men, one of them older than age itself, sat on the steps leading to the throne. Wallace started at the beginning, tracing what had happened since Roman ships destroyed the galleys of the Carthaginians and burned the city of Carthage to the ground. He traced history up to the time of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. He gave Hannibal a quick summary of where the Allied troops stood in relation to the mad dictators of Europe.

"My leaders," he concluded, "have heard of your fighting among the hills. We have seen you kill men of both nations and it made us wonder what you were actually fighting for. I was sent here to find you and ask for your aid."

Hannibal of Carthage did not reply

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immediately. He sat silently for some time, head bent, eyes closed. Wallace watched, wondering if the man would believe—if he could grasp the truth. At last the Leader looked up. Grim purpose shone in his eyes.

"You say that the roots of Rome have been destroyed. That the sons of Roman politicians no longer fight against Carthage?"

"Carthage," Wallave explained gently, "has become Tunis. It is in the hands of the Allies."

"Then," Hannibal said quietly, "tell me your plans. I will call my warriors at once and we will be ready to march in a fortnight. The legions of Carthage will march on the side of the oppressed. Such men as you tell me of will die at the points of gladius and pilum."

THERE came the sound of sudden shouts from outside. Hannibal waited quietly as the sounds of excitement came closer. The tent flap opened quickly.

Wallace jumped to his feet as three warriors entered. They were dragging Frances Boise and her father into the tent. The old man was stolid and defiant. The girl looked up at them with tears in her eyes. Her face was streaked with dust. Zeratin, the Red Beard, stood behind them, his face an inscrutable mask.

"These two have killed the slave girl Alixe," he said. "I have brought them before you as is the custom."

While Rex Wallace stood stiff and alert, Hannibal walked slowly down to where the couple lay stretched on the ground. Neither made an attempt to arise. Hannibal stood quietly in deliberation, arms folded.

"There is no choice," he said finally. "You will arrange for the execution of them both with the coming of the next sun."

CHAPTER XIII

Zeratin Saves Face

THERE was no doubt in Rex Wallace's mind that his mission had been successful. In his head he carried a full, detailed plan of the coming attack in the passes of the Alps. The three great tunnels in the Swiss Alps, [illegible]berg, St. Gotthard and Simplon had been destroyed weeks before. This left only the high passes open into enemy country. The St. Bernard pass into France was also blocked by Nazis. It was to be Hannibal's task to open all the passes through the snow bound country and break a way for the Allies and their heavy equipment. Hannibal's army consisted of 40,000 men. Divided into legions of 4,500 men, he could plan his assault in many directions, strike terror into the already frightened Nazis and the Allies would be on their way to victory. Knowing the fear which Hannibal's rare attacks had already stirred up, Wallace was confident of the outcome.

The girl and Papa Boise were condemned to die at dawn. At dawn, also, he and Snub Wallace would start the speedy trek down the steep mountains, pick up a car if one were available at Turin and go directly to General Lathers at Milan.

Wallace slept fitfully. The camp was silent and yet a new note of purpose had been in the air before sundown. Men had hurried about, while others sat in their tents mending weapons and preparing for the coming attack. They had looked at Wallace for the first time with comradeship in their rugged faces.

He thought of Frances and the old man, confined in the stone prison. The thought of letting them die was unbearable to him. He knew now that

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Frances had taken the gun to the arena, thus saving his life and getting him an interview with Hannibal.

Yet, to free them was impossible. The prison was strong and well guarded. For Wallace to interfere would turn Hannibal against him and ruin the Allies' chance to enter Germany this year. Perhaps the lives of a million women and children hinged on the pair in the prison.

Unable to face the thought of the coming dawn, Wallace tried to catch some sleep as the sky grew light in the east. He was awakened by Zeratin.

"It is time for you to go. I am to accompany you past the outer guards."

The warrior looked haggard and worn. He also, Wallace decided, had had a bad night.

WALLACE arose, awakened Snub and they dressed hurriedly. Zeratin stood close by as they donned heavy coats and went to the elephants waiting in the dawn mists outside the tent. Once on the backs of the beasts, they went swiftly toward the high, cave-like exit to the valley. The elephants covered the ground with rapid, shuffling strides.

Zeratin was silent until they reached the guard, Rudger. Then, as Wallace pushed his feet into the leather straps of his skis, Zeratin said:

"You need not worry about the girl and her father. It was my duty to see that they were punished. Theirs was a crime we cannot permit unless . . ."

He hesitated, his face turning a warm red.

" . . . unless some warrior will take the person who committed the crime and be responsible for his further actions."

"You have taken the girl as your slave?" Wallace asked quietly.

"I have taken her as my wife." Zeratin turned on his heel and strode hastily back toward the valley.

Snub had already settled himself comfortably on the toboggan-like arrangement of skis.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said softly. "So that's how he got around the rules! Come on, Rex, pick up that rope and get moving. We've got a long way to go."

Rex Wallace was grinning happily as he took the rope that was attached to Snub's makeshift sled and started in long, easy strides down the steep, snow-clad mountain. The skis gained momentum and in a few minutes he was following the trail skillfully, trying hard to keep Snub Edwards from pitching off the sled that slipped along wildly behind him.

CHAPTER XIV

Betrayal?

GENERAL JOHN L. LATHERS was as cool and business-like as he had been when Wallace left on his search for the lost legions. The offices he had occupied were bombed by the Nazi night patrol and Lathers was living in another building halfway down the street. He greeted Wallace with the usual hearty hand clasp and sat down to listen.

"Incredible," he muttered, after the story was told. "Yet, you're not a man to take fairy tales too much to heart, Wallace. If you say it is really Hannibal, we'll take your word. I'll start the wheels turning tonight. Nazi troops have been coming in pretty close to the valley. I'd like to keep our plans under cover as long as possible."

Wallace stood up, stretched comfortably and lighted a cigarette.

"Good," he agreed. "There'll be

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plenty of excitement once it starts. Right now, I need a bed."

He awakened several times during the night to the sound of hurried preparations within the town. Heavy trucks, snowplows, and artillery roared through the streets toward the north. Toward one o'clock a hurried knock sounded on the door. A sleepy-eyed messenger was outside.

"Beg pardon, sir," he removed his cap. "General Lathers' compliments, and will you see him at once."

"Somethin' wrong?" Snub asked from the other bed.

Wallace said, "We're due at Lathers' office at once. Somethin's up."

They saw at once that Lathers was deeply concerned about something.

"I haven't said anything to my men," he said when they entered his office. "Didn't want them to know we were following a ghost army through the Alps. They have simply been told to move through the numerous canyons at my general order."

Wallace nodded.

"Well," Lathers went on, "A patrol reported in at a small village near the burned chalet tonight about ten. They said they had seen an army, carrying torches, heading toward southern France through the Little St. Bernard Pass. There seemed to be several thousand men and they were moving swiftly."

Wallace was on his feet. He dropped his cigarette, stepped on it, and stood thoughtfully by the window.

"I know what you're thinking. The same thing I am," Lathers said quietly.

"But that's impossible." Wallace whipped around. "I trust this man Hannibal. He doesn't run away from battles. He fights them."

"Yet," Lathers reminded him gently, "centuries ago he came through that pass from Spain. He may have decided that we were his enemies and retreated before we could organize our forces."

"Nuts," Snub said gruffly. "Those babies never ran away from anything."

Wallace drew his coat on hurriedly.

"That's what *I* think," he said. "Don't change any of your plans. Give me a plane that will drop me off just south of the chalet. I'll take three red rockets with me. If Hannibal is still there and ready to fight, I'll fire them all. He'll be ready to start when you are. Get that army of yours moving through every pass in the Alps."

"And if you don't succeed?"

"I will," Wallace answered grimly. "If I have to lick those Nazis myself, I'm going to cable my story of a victory before winter sets in."

THE high slopes above the chalet were dark and windswept. Wallace climbed swiftly and, without Snub to hold him back, found himself close to the green valley before dawn.

He stumbled forward in the gathering snow and was ready to cry with relief when Rudger's great voice boomed a greeting.

"Hooo!"

Wallace answered the shout weakly and staggered forward. Rudger's great arms were around him, helping him the last few steps to the safety of the cave.

"What brings you here?" Rudger's cherry red face was alight with curiosity. "Our Leader and his men are already hidden at their stations in the passes."

Relief surged through Wallaces tired mind.

"Then they didn't leave through the St. Bernard?"

Rudger's laugh came from his great belly. When at last he was quiet, his face became grave.

"Then you were fooled also?"

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"Fooled? I don't understand."

"It was those Nazis," Rudger told him. "I guess that's what you call the stiff idiots who march stiffly and die in terror. Last night they must have seen our light. They have been troubled by us for months. Anyway, a huge army of them came up the pass and straight toward our hiding place. We could not hope to stop them if they managed to train their fire shooting weapons on our camp. Our Leader had a simpler plan to save his men. An hour before they arrived, he had torches tied to the heads of a thousand oxen. We drove them across the hills and into the pass. The Nazis followed. You should have seen them! I wonder how they felt today when they found they had chased our oxen all night long."

Again, Rudger roared with laughter.

Rex Wallace felt a warmth inside himself that made him want to give the big scoundrel, Rudger, a bear hug like Zeratin had done. Then the plans were intact. Hannibal was waiting for the signal to start.

He ripped open his pack quickly, lined up three large rockets on the snow and applied a match. Rudger watched him with wide, red eyes.

"What matter of magic is this?"

The first rocket left its tube, then the second and third. In the early morning light, three large blobs of bright red blossomed out over the snow covered pass, hung against the sky and faded. The lookouts in the valley ten miles below would be watching. Already the signal would be on the wire to Milan. General Lathers and his massive army were ready to march.

He turned to Rudger.

"Surely you don't have to stay here alone?"

Rudger grinned.

"I was to stay, so that if you returned, I could lead you to the pass where Hannibal himself will lead his first three legions. The remainder of the army is distributed as you planned."

TOGETHER they started the strangest trek Wallace had ever made. Rudger, strong as an ox yet fast on his feet, led the way across the backbone of the range. They skirted deep valleys and many times Wallace caught glimpses of German outposts. Men who were clinging to small clefts in the rock, lying behind ready machine guns.

At last, close to noon, they halted. Rudger had led him deep into the enemy stronghold. Yet, up here where the snow was deep and heavy equipment could not come, no soldiers troubled them. Rudger halted several yards from the edge of a deep pass.

"We are safe here," he said.

They edged forward together. Wallace stopped suddenly, his head over the edge of the valley. A thousand yard drop, direct to the river bed, was before them. Down at the bottom of the cut were barricades of barbed wire. He realized just how well the Germans were prepared when he saw line upon line of pill boxes. Dozens of tanks and heavy guns were drawn into the valley.

"We will wait," Rudger said, and rolled lazily over on his back. "Our own men will be here soon."

The afternoon passed slowly. It was close to nightfall, and the sun had dropped until the valley below was in the shadows, when a sound came from behind him. It was the men of Hannibal. A small group of them came first with odd, wooden-wheeled machines that carried heavy boulders. These were pushed close to the cliff edge.

Then came the bowmen, dozens of them, like shadows against the snow. They carried long ropes looped about their waists. Their quivers were filled with arrows.

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It was night now. Wallace could see the campfires burning below him. Armed sentries patrolled the open ground about the pill boxes. Nazi soldiers were sitting about, their rifles close.

"Wooooeeee!"

The faint, animal-like cry drifted up from the south end of the pass.

The place was suddenly alive with activity. First the bowmen, firing their arrows down the smooth walls directly into the German camp. The tips had been covered with fluffy blobs of cloth. Fire leaped from the arrows and the canyon was alight with the torches that sped down from above.

"This makes them soft," Rudger growled at his elbow.

Men were running forward to the cliff edge, pulling the carts. Wallace joined the mob, sweating behind the huge boulders. Tons of the rough granite went over the edge. When he again chanced a look below, the Nazi camp was in an uproar. They had not expected an attack from overhead. More than that, this was the first time they had tasted the burning arrows.

More torches were aflame now, but not on the cliff. The first legions of Hannibal were closing in. The Nazis had no heart to fight ghosts. Machine guns opened up with short, sharp bursts and then died out quickly. Hannibal's men swept into the camp, spears and arrows flying in a steady hail. The Leader himself was before his troops, his great sword sweeping death in wide swaths.

"This is no battle," Rudger spat his disgust. "They run before they fight."

IT WAS true. The Nazi General had died with a barbarian spear in his neck. No man in the pass wanted to meet a like fate from ghosts that haunted them from the past.

Tanks and equipment were moving swiftly north. In other passes, Wallace realized, the same thing was happening.

South, already in the canyons, Allied forces were on the way. Lathers' armies were rolling and would keep on rolling straight into Germany. Hannibal and his men struck terror into the Nazi troops. General John L. Lathers with his strongly armed, keen fighting-men of England and America would be ready to take over once the Nazis were clear of their fox holes in the mountains.

"In twenty-four hours the American troops have fought their way deep into the Alps," Wallace whispered to himself. His coming story was already writing itself in his mind. "Nothing will stop them now. We will enter Germany and occupied France as victors before the week is closed."

He paused, watching the men below, fighting wildly, ever north, ever into the running hordes of Nazis.

"With the help of Hannibal of Carthage," he whispered, and then a broad grin crossed his face. "No, that wouldn't be so good. Some people would think the Chicago *Blade* needed a new foreign correspondent if I started telling of Hannibal at a time like this."

He turned to Rudger. The big warrior's face was covered with grime and sweat.

"I will return to the valley to report my story," he said. "After that I'm coming to thank Hannibal personally for what he has done."

Rudger took his hand, almost breaking it in his heavy grasp.

"Our Leader will conquer his foes by morning," he said gruffly. "His task is complete. I will take your message to him and he will be content. Now we will say goodbye."

"But, I'll see you tomorrow, or the

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day following," Wallace insisted.

Rudger pointed far to the east. The blaze of burning equipment and the roar of tanks came faintly from St. Bernard Pass.

"The elephants march in the pass once more," he said softly. "We came with the thunder of their hoofs. Who knows what the morning will bring?"

CHAPTER XV

The Elephants March

REX WALLACE stood with Snub Edwards on the green valley bottom. The tents were still there but they flapped wildly in the wind. The storm dipped over the head of the pass and snow started wafting softly into the deserted camp.

Wallace trudged with heavy heart from one end of the camp to the other. The grass was beginning to turn brown and the battle flag that dipped from Hannibal's tent had already ripped loose and was lying on the frozen turf.

"The elephants marched through the pass last night," Wallace said suddenly.

"The tanks," Snub asked. "Do you really think the vibration brought them here and sent them away?"

Wallace led the way slowly toward the slave tent that Frances Boise had shared with Alixe.

"I like to think of it this way," he said.

"There was a mission for the gods to perform and that Hannibal has at last gone to a just reward for doing that job well."

He hesitated, leaned over and picked a small sheet of note paper from the ground under the tent. It was covered with the neat, precise writing of a young girl.

"Papa Boise and I go with Zeratin," Wallace read aloud. "Where this strange army will finally drive its tent stakes, I cannot guess. Zeratin has asked me to be his wife and swears that no harm will come to us if we go with him. I am very proud of my Red Beard warrior. You need not worry about us.

Frances Boise."

The valley had grown cold and bleak as Wallace read the note. As they silently left the tent, snow touched his cheek and melted. The ground was white and snowflakes drifted down into great, fluffy blankets.

The wind grew stronger even as they reached the head of the valley. Looking back at the scene of utter desolation, Wallace bent his back to the coming storm.

"*Where this army will finally drive its tent stakes, I do not know. . . .*" He repeated the words softly.

Turning to Snub, he caught the solemn expression on the photographer's face

"Come on, soldier," he said loudly. "We're going to watch the American boys march into Berlin."

"Right!" Snub's voice was low and tense.

They traveled down the mountain side slowly, never looking back to where the banner of Hannibal disappeared forever beneath a soft blanket of snow.

THE END

"CRAIG'S BOOK"—Next Month's Complete Novel!

By DON WILCOX

The fantastic story of the most unusual bequest of all; a book in which were kept a series of white cards which were not cards at all, but the imprisoned entities of six lovely girls. And when the cards were thrown into the air. . . !

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MUST ALL LIVING THINGS HAVE PARENTS?

HAVE you ever seen a piece of rotting meat teeming with maggots? You must also have noted how old cheese becomes infested by mice—how bread and foods become infected with small plant-like growths. Also, by taking some old hay and placing it in warm water and then examining a specimen of this water—do you know what such a sample will reveal when placed under the high-powered lens of a microscope? Why, it will seem that the hay has turned into thousands of free swimming and microscopic animals. All about the particle of hay will be seen swimming many important members of the protozan kingdom. Ameoba, paramecium, and others. What does this all mean? Is it possible that a piece of meat or a portion of moist bread is capable of giving rise to living animals and plants? Can it be true that to warm a bundle of hay one is turning the non-living hay into microscopic plants and animals?

The first man to challenge this idea of spontaneous generation, or the spontaneous origin of life from non-living material, was Francesco Redi. Redi could not conceive of a piece of meat giving rise to a flock of maggots and decided to prove his point by experimentation. His experiment was so simple, so direct, that it is a wonder the scientists before Redi's time did not conceive of it.

Redi took three jars and in each of these jars he placed a piece of meat. The first jar he left uncovered. The second he covered with a fine netting. The third jar he covered with parchment. The results were astounding. To the scientific mind, spontaneous generation should have died that day when Redi announced the result of his simple experiment.

The meat spoiled in all three jars. However, only in the open jar did Redi find maggots in the meat. In the jar covered with fine netting, no maggots were to be found in the meat proper. However, on the netting itself, Redi found eggs laid by flies. When these eggs were hatched they developed into maggots, but when these maggots could not work their way through the net into the meat, they soon died. Redi proceeded to raise the maggots in the open bottle and soon found that they developed into full grown flies. This was the death blow to the theory of spontaneous generation. Maggots came from the eggs laid by flies and in turn developed into flies themselves. Soon it became agreed that in the case of the organisms visible to the unaided eye at least, spontaneous generation did not occur. The idea—that all living things came from pre-existing living things—stood unchallenged.

In 1638 Anton Leevwenhoek, the father of microscopy, told the world that there existed a universe of microscopic animal-like plants—called bacteria. This discovery started experimenters working with bacteria cultures and broths; the result was a renewal of the old feud. While the question of spontaneous generation had been settled for the visible plants and animals by Redi's observations, did this type of solution apply to the kingdom of microscopic plants? Some scientists noted that no matter how carefully they protected their broths, the presence of microbes in them was inevitable, and therefore microbes must be the connecting link between the living and non-living world.

It was Lazzaro Spallanzani, a famous Italian scientist, who first attempted to challenge experimentally this new form of spontaneous generation. His experiment was also simple. However, in science it is simplicity that is really strived for. Spallanzani placed broth in pre-heated flasks and sealed these flasks in a flame. The result? The broth in each and every flask was not in any manner infested by any type of microbe.

The advocates of spontaneous generation were not satisfied. They contended, that since the air possessed life giving qualities, no method that sealed a flask in a manner that would exclude air could be a valid experiment.

In 1836 Franz Schulze attempted to pacify the skeptical scientists. He admitted air to the heated media, but he had the air pass through sulfuric acid on its way into the flask. Again, as before, the skeptics objected. "How do we know that sulfuric acid does not poison the air and render its life giving qualities useless?" This was the answer given by the skeptics to Franz Schulze.

In 1837 Theodore Schwann tried again to compromise with these stubborn critics—men who were too lazy to experiment on their own behalf and gave only "hot air" as their contribution to the scientific world. Schwann passed air into his broth via a heated tube. The critics again refused to accept this experiment. "How do we know that Schwann has not destroyed the life-given quality of air by the heat from the heated tube?"

It took the mighty Louis Pasteur to deliver the final death blow to the idea of spontaneous generation. Pasteur used a round flask with a long drawn out neck. This neck was curved—so as to resemble a "U." Pasteur heated his broth so as to kill all possible contamination and then let the broth cool. Air could easily enter through the long "U" shaped neck of the flask, but the dust, upon which the bacteria floated, could not climb up the bend of the "U", against gravity, and hence the bacteria was left stranded along the sides of this long tube. The result was remarkable. The broth showed no trace of bacteria as long as it remained in an upright position. If, however, the flask was tilted in such a manner as to allow some of the broth to touch the sides of the "U" shaped neck and then return to the main body of broth—then, we would find that the entire broth had become contaminated.—*Carter T. Wainwright.*

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GENIE OF

BY WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

It is a far cry to ancient Bagdad, yet at this Washington Ball it was only a few steps—through an ordinary door. . !

DRAKE MASTERSON stood up and smiled with pleasure when Sharon Ward entered the room. Most men did so and he was no exception to the rule.

Sharon was a tall, stunningly built creature with a mane of bright red hair that fell to her bare shoulders in dramatically effective waves. Her eyes were green in the exciting pallor of her face but when she smiled it was like flashing on a light in a dark room.

"Hello, Drake," she said, crossing the long, luxuriously furnished drawing room of her apartment with lithe grace. "Did I keep you waiting?"

Drake put down his drink and took one of her outstretched hands.

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BAGDAD

A dozen wretched human figures toiled at the cruel wheel

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"Not long." His eyes went over her appreciatively. She was wearing a strapless evening gown that fitted her slim body like a crimson sheath. "Anyway," he grinned, "it was worth it."

"A pretty speech," Sharon murmured. She straightened his white tie slightly and flicked an imaginary speck of dust from the shining satin lapels of his dress coat. "It deserves another. You look like the ideal career diplomat, smooth, immaculate and imperturbable. Do you have the blueprints of our latest battleship tucked away in your breast pocket? That's all you need."

"Hardly," Drake smiled, "since the blueprints of a battleship weigh about two thousand pounds. But I might have a code message or two around somewhere." His grey eyes crinkled at the corners and his lean, dark face was amused. "Will that do?"

"Perfectly," Sharon said. "And maybe we'll meet a spy in a black net dress at the party tonight who'll slip you a Micky and vanish with your code messages tucked down the bosom of her dress. That's still the traditional place of concealment, isn't it?"

"You've got me there," Drake said. "You've obviously read more spy stories than I have." He glanced at his watch. "Would you like a cigarette before we leave? We've just about got time."

Sharon nodded and took a cigarette from the silver case he extended.

"What kind of an affair is tonight's going to be?" she asked.

"Just a routine reception for the Turkish minister," Drake answered. "There'll be quite a crowd. Large sprinkling of important gentlemen from the East who are here on lend-lease business; our own representatives and Britain's. That's about all."

He lit Sharon's cigarette and his own, returned the lighter to his pocket and smiled at the girl.

"You look a bit worried. Anything wrong?"

SHARON made an impatient gesture with her cigarette and strolled to the windows that overlooked the row of vast white government buildings. She cupped her elbow in the palm of her right hand and stared moodily at the scene.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," she said at last. "Probably just nerves." She blew a thick column of blue smoke toward the ceiling and then turned suddenly to face Drake. "It's just that I feel so damn useless," she said. "I'd like to be doing something important in this war instead of drifting around with the rest of the Washington butterflies." Her eyes were bitter and dark against the pallor of her cheeks. "I missed the Air Transport because—"

"I know," Drake interrupted with a grin. "You missed because your license was torn up by the civil commission for stunting at five hundred feet and endangering lives and property!"

"Oh, I know all that," Sharon said, "but you'd think they'd overlook it in times like these." She crushed out her cigarette with a vicious gesture. "I'm so bored and disgusted with myself I feel I'm losing my mind."

"Well we're all in the same boat," Drake said seriously. "I don't like Washington any more than you do, but my job happens to be here for the time being."

Sharon smiled faintly. "You're just trying to make me feel good by comparing your set-up with mine. You're in diplomacy and attached to one of the hottest departments in the capitol. Why, you've got your finger on the pulse of the East, the most dynamic section of the world today."

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"Still," Drake shrugged, "I'd rather be out where the action is. They could get some octogenarian to handle my work and let me get out where I could do something a little more definite."

"Now you're just being silly," Sharon said impatiently. She put another cigarette in her mouth with a quick, decisive gesture. "You're one of the foremost authorities in the world on Oriental languages. Why should the government let you go out and get your head blown off?"

Drake smiled at her vehemence.

"You'd think I was absolutely irreplaceable to hear you talk," he said.

"Well, you're good," Sharon said stubbornly. She grinned suddenly and her entire face kindled. "You must be. You taught me Arabic and that would qualify anyone as an expert."

"I guess you've got me there," Drake said. He glanced at his watch again, then put out his cigarette and got to his feet. "It's about time for us to be on our way. This party tonight may cheer us up a little. Did I mention that it was going to be a costume affair?"

Sharon eyed him with indignant surprise.

"You did not," she said. "And this is a fine time to be telling me. Won't I look right in step with this backless evening gown? And what about you?"

"Oh, it's all right," Drake said. "We weren't expected to be in costume anyway. The State Department has a peculiar antipathy toward any of its members running around in masquerade so I'm excused. And naturally you are too."

"Well, that's better," Sharon said. "You had me worried for a moment. Excuse me a minute, I'll get a wrap."

Drake lit another cigarette. . . .

THE reception for the Turkish ambassador was held in a large estate on the outskirts of Washington. Sharon and Drake were ushered into the vast drawing room by an imperturbable butler, dressed for the occasion in a flowing robe and great baggy trousers of white silk that clasped at the ankles a few inches above curling suede slippers.

Sharon gasped with delight when they entered the splendidly decorated room. Walls and ceilings were hung with luxurious, jewel encrusted drapes and great animal skins were scattered over the gleaming floor.

Huge divans, covered in gaudy silk and strewn with fluffy pillows had replaced the conventional furniture; braziers of incense were hanging in all corners of the room and from their brass tops a yellow, aromatic smoke was issuing.

Except for a handful of Americans and Britons in evening clothes, everyone was wearing the flowing silk robes of the ancient East. The men wore turbans around their heads and the women, many of whom were beautiful, were decked with jeweled tiaras.

"How stunning!" Sharon whispered to Drake. "Everything looks so real it's amazing!"

They were taken to their host and after a few polite exchanges Drake murmured an excuse and escaped with Sharon toward the dining-room where refreshments were being served.

The room was thick with incense and more exotically garbed guests. Food and drink were being dispensed by serving girls in gaily colored silk trousers, tight brassieres and chaste veils.

Drake garnered two glasses and led Sharon to a divan. They lit cigarettes, sipped their drinks and watched the party.

"Fortunately," Drake said, "we can leave early."

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"Oh, I'm enjoying this," Sharon said. "But I could do with a little less incense." She coughed and fanned herself with a handkerchief. "It seems to be a little rich for my taste. Could you open a window?"

"Sure thing," Drake said.

He put down his drink and stepped to a row of draped windows directly behind their divan. He tried unsuccessfully to open them, then returned to Sharon's side with a shrug.

"Funny," he said, "they're bolted shut."

"Well, never mind," Sharon smiled. "I can put up with it for a while."

Drake frowned at the windows.

"Yes, but it's odd. Supposing there was a fire?"

"Oh, there you go being practical again," Sharon laughed. "Please don't worry about it. I wouldn't have mentioned it if I thought it was going to worry you."

"Well it does," Drake said.

"Now you're being stuffy," Sharon smiled. "If you started worrying about everything that was irregular you'd have a full time job on your hands."

WHILE they were talking a smiling little man waddled across to them with a glass of hot, spiced wine in his plump, pink hand.

"How do you do?" he said, smiling until his face seemed to be a net-work of soft creases.

Drake glanced at him in surprise; for the man's salutation had been delivered in Arabic; not modern Arabic, but a variation of the tongue that was now considered archaic. His astonishment was the same as if he'd been addressed in the English of Chaucer.

Drake answered him courteously, using the same archaic dialect. The smiling fat man appeared delighted.

"How nice, how nice," he said, rubbing his plump hands together. "It is so nice to hear my tongue spoken."

Sharon tugged Drake's sleeve.

"What goes on?" she asked in a whisper. "He isn't using the Arabic you taught me. Although I can make out the general meaning of what he's saying."

"It's an old dialect," Drake answered. "I haven't heard it since I was a post-grad." He turned to the fat man who was regarding them with genial, twinkling eyes. "My name is Masterson, Drake Masterson. May I present Miss Sharon Ward."

"I am charmed," the little round man murmured, still speaking in ancient Arabic. He bowed extravagantly. He was dressed in loose red trousers and a short jeweled vest. A tassle-topped fez was set at a rakish angle on his pumpkin-shaped head. His face was a soft, pasty white and his little eyes looked like shiny raisins set in a pan of bread dough.

"My name is Humai," he said. "I am very, very glad to meet both of you. Could I get you a glass of wine or something to eat?"

"I'm afraid not," Drake smiled, "but thanks just the same. As a matter of fact, Miss Ward and I were just thinking about leaving."

"Oh, you can't go yet," the little man cried. His eyes twinkled merrily. "The party is just beginning. Do you not find everything delightful?"

"Yes, it's very nice," Sharon said politely. She coughed slightly and fanned herself. The thick swirling clouds of incense moved sluggishly from the draft caused by her hand.

"Do you not like the incense?" the little fat man inquired solicitously.

"It's pretty thick," Sharon said. She coughed again and smiled wanly at Drake. "I think I'll have to step out-

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side and get a breath of air."

"Sure thing," Drake said. "I'll go with you. Do you need a wrap?"

"No, I don't think so."

DRAKE helped her to rise. Humai watched with a solicitous expression on his round white face.

"I am very sorry," he murmured.

"That's all right," Drake said. "Miss Ward will be fine after a little air."

Sharon put her hand to her forehead.

"Yes, I'll be all right," she said. "My knees feel a little weak, that's all."

"It is so unfortunate," Humai murmured. "The entertainment has not yet started. It is unfortunate that you must miss it."

"I think we'll mange to bear up under the loss," Drake said drily.

He put an arm about Sharon's waist and started across the room. The fumes of incense were swirling about his head in a cloying suffocating cloud.

"But you do not know what you're missing," Humai said, trotting beside them on his short, fat legs. His round, brown face was creased anxiously.

"Please, Drake," Sharon murmured weakly against his shoulder. "Let's hurry."

Humai tugged at Drake's arm.

"Look just one instant," he begged.

He waved his hand in the air and suddenly, to the left of the girl, a swirling segment of the smoke began to coalesce into the shadowy outlines of a human figure. Sharon drew away from Drake and stared with amazement at the figure, whose shape and outline were becoming more definite with each second.

She threw her hands up in an instinctive gesture of astonishment as the figure completed its emergence from the smoke and stood before her—a towering, brown-skinned, turbaned genie, bearing an immense tray of sparkling jewels in his arms.

"Drake!" Sharon cried. Her voice was a blend of incredulity, astonishment and fear.

Drake stepped to her side and the heavy, dense smoke billowed in the wake of his passage. He coughed as the spiced fumes seemed to bite into his lungs.

"It's some kind of a trick, darling," he gasped.

Humai was at his side, grinning.

"Yes, it is a trick, but such a nice one," he said. "Would you care to see more?"

He waved his pudgy hand and the towering apparition vanished slowly into the smoke. "I will show you, now—"

"We're getting out of here," Drake snapped. "Miss Ward needs fresh air."

HE WAS getting a little annoyed with this bland, round little man and found it hard to keep the irritation from his voice.

"Let me help you to the door," Humai suggested anxiously.

"We can find it," Drake said. "Thanks."

Humai took his arm gently.

"Please," he said, "there is a side door that leads to the garden. It is quicker, I will show you the way."

"All right," Drake said. He felt annoyed with himself for his irritation. After all, the little fellow only wanted to help. "Let's go," he said.

He put an arm around Sharon's waist.

"How do you feel?" he asked, concerned.

"All right, I guess," she whispered. She put a hand slowly to her forehead. "Everything seems sort of vague and fuzzy. Are all the lights off?"

"Of course not," Drake said. He glanced around the room worriedly.

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The place *did* seem darker. The electric illumination had been replaced by huge candles that guttered splendidly in the bizarre gloom of the tapestried room. "It's just this damn incense," he said, coughing.

Humai took his hand.

"Just follow me," he said. "We will be outside in a moment." He hesitated a moment. "Don't you think she had better walk without support?" he asked gently. "The exercise would do her good."

"No," Drake said grimly. "She needs help. Please hurry."

"Of course," Humai said.

He padded toward the center of the room and then turned right down a long corridor that Drake did not remember seeing when they arrived. Drake followed him, supporting Sharon with an arm about her waist.

The corridor was murky with the same thick incense and he couldn't make out any details, except that the ceiling seemed to tower hundreds of feet above their heads and that the carpet on which they walked was incredibly thick and soft.

Humai walked directly ahead of them, waddling slightly from side to side and turning occasionally to smile reassuringly at them.

"How much longer?" Drake asked anxiously.

"Not very far," Humai answered. "It is only a little way from here."

Drake tried to peer down the length of the corridor, to pierce the gloomy, incense-laden air, but it was impossible. He could only see a dozen feet ahead, before the visibility was obscured by the thick pall-like curtain of yellow, pungent incense.

"Just a few more steps," he whispered to Sharon.

"I'm all right," she murmured sleepily. She was almost a dead weight on his arm. Drake attempted to walk more rapidly but he found that his legs were curiously weak. He was practically staggering. There was a peculiar cloudiness before his eyes that was not caused by the dense vapors of the incense.

HE SHOOK his head and coughed rackingly. Tears were streaming from his eyes and he was on the point of collapse when a sudden strong draft of cool, bracing air blew into his face. It was as reviving as a plunge into a cold mountain lake.

He breathed deeply, gratefully, and he could feel the cloudiness fading from his brain. Dimly he could see Humai standing at an open door, beckoning to him with a friendly hand.

"That was not so long, was it?" he asked.

"Long enough," Drake said weakly.

He helped Sharon through the door and Humai followed, closing the door softly behind him.

Drake wiped his eyes with his handkerchief and took several deep breaths of the cool air before he turned to Sharon.

"There," he said, "you'll feel better in a minute."

She leaned against him, breathing slowly. Her eyes were closed and her face was ghostly white in the dim moonlight.

"I feel better already," she murmured.

She smiled and opened her eyes slowly.

"That's the girl," he said cheerfully. "You just had a bit too much of that incense." He shook his head slightly and took another deep breath. "It almost got me for a moment."

Sharon smiled, and then her gaze moved casually from his face and past his shoulder. For an instant her fea-

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tures seemed to be frozen in blankness and then a dazed, stricken, incredulous expression spread over her face. Her eyes grew dark and wide with a terrible fear.

"Drake," she gasped, and her voice was a whisper that almost died in her throat. "Drake, I'm losing my mind!"

Drake patter her shoulder.

"Ssssh," he said gently. "You're a little tired and nervous. You—"

"No, Drake," Sharon cried. Her eyes did not come back to his face, but remained fixed on something over his shoulder. "Where are we? What's happened to us?"

There was no mistaking the terrible urgency in her voice. Drake turned and the sight that met his eyes left him weak and breathless.

CHAPTER II

THEY were standing at the edge of a garden—a garden that stretched hundreds of feet before them; and beyond the garden the towering spires and minarets of a dazzlingly weird city were visible in the pale, ghostly moonlight.

The familiar scenes of Washington were gone. Capitol dome, Washington monument, all the majestic avenues of great buildings had disappeared completely. In their place, sprawling before Drake's stunned gaze, was a grotesque city of startling architecture and crazy-quilt design.

It was incredible!

Drake shook his head groggily and passed a hand over his eyes. This must be some sort of mirage, some optical illusion or distortion. But when he looked again nothing had changed. The great white city of weird arches, mosques and towers still glistened in the moonlight, sprawling as far as his eyes could reach.

Sharon gripped his arm tightly.

"Am I going crazy, Drake?" she asked. Her voice was dazed, weak.

"Maybe we both are," Drake said grimly. He turned suddenly on Humai, the bland, round-faced little man who had led them to this place. He was watching them with a pleasant smile on his pale face.

"What's this all about?" he demanded, waving a hand helplessly toward the vast gleaming city.

Humai appeared politely perplexed.

"I am afraid I don't quite understand," he said, looking from Drake to Sharon with puzzled eyes.

"What's this city?" Drake asked. "Is it some kind of an optical illusion?" He glared angrily and helplessly at the bland little man. "Don't tell me you can't see it," he snapped heatedly.

"But of course I can see it," Humai murmured. He smiled again and his eyes almost disappeared in soft folds of flesh. "It's a very lovely city, isn't it? I'm sure you will learn to enjoy its many attractions."

"What do you mean?" Drake demanded.

Humai then shrugged his soft round shoulders and squinted comically at Drake.

"Allow me," he murmured, "to welcome you in the name of the Caliph Zinidad to his royal palace. I am sure the Caliph will wish to express his welcome personally in the near future. Particularly," Humai said, smiling directly at Sharon, "will he wish to—ah—welcome the charming young lady."

"What kind of nonsense are you talking?" Drake snapped. "Who is this Zinidad you're babbling about?"

"Zinidad," Humai said, "is the Caliph of Bagdad. A most charming person—ah—under certain circumstances."

Drake stepped closer to Humai, his

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hands knotting into capable looking fists.

"Listen, my fat friend," he said. "I'm just about out of patience. I'm tired of listening to your attempts at comedy. If you can explain what in the name of Heaven has happened, do so, but stop chattering about the Caliph of Bagdad."

"But he is a most important person," Humai said, smiling. He shrugged and stepped back a pace, dropping his hand to the handle of the door that had opened to the garden. "But since you do not believe me," he said mildly, "I will say no more."

DRAKE automatically glanced at the door and when he did he received another shock. The door was of massive construction and, even in the pale moonlight he could see that its surface was ornately gilded with a substance that gleamed like gold. It reached dozens of feet above him and was topped by a wide arch whose wings reached fully thirty feet on either side of its apex.

Sharon was staring at the monstrous door with amazed, stunned eyes.

"Drake," she cried. "Look!"

She pointed to the immense palace whose turrets and ramparts were visible beyond the great arched gate. The palace was a sprawling mass of weird architecture with odd wings and abutments seemingly thrown in without design or any attempt at order or unity. Ghostly moonlight shone on the alabaster walls of the palace transforming it to a shimmering creation of strange beauty. Windows gaped from the white walls like dark, unfriendly eyes.

"You are gazing upon the palace of the Caliph," Humai said. "I hope you find it pleasing, for you will be seeing it many times in the years to come."

As he finished speaking he tapped lightly on the great door. Almost instantly it began to swing open, ponderously, slowly.

"You will come with me," Humai said gently.

"I'll be damned if we will," Drake said grimly.

"I am afraid I must insist," Humai said.

"Go to hell," Drake said calmly. "I don't know who you are or what your game is, but I don't like it. We're staying right here until we find out what this thing is all about."

Humai sighed gently, almost sadly.

"As you wish," he murmured.

He clapped his hands together and the immense gate swung back rapidly; a splash of light fell across them from within. Heavy footsteps were heard.

Sharon moved close to Drake.

"What is it?" she whispered. "I'm frightened, Drake."

He put his arm about her slim shoulders and drew her to his side.

"Don't worry, honey," he said.

When the gate had swung open they were facing a wide, high arched corridor; and down this corridor, coming toward them at a purposeful march, was a company of brawny, half-clad soldiers. The advancing group of men wore loose trousers and gaudy sashes into which were stuck gleaming, curved scimitars. In their hands were torches that cast an eerie guttering illumination against the burnished wall of the great hallway.

Sharon shrank against Drake as the company came to a halt before Humai. The soldiers—eight in number—were giants, almost eight feet in height, with great deep chests and Herculean shoulders. Muscles rippled like sinewy ropes beneath their smooth black hides.

One of the company bowed to Humai and murmured something inaudible to Drake. The rest of the great creatures

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stood in attitudes of submissive attention. It was an incongruous spectacle; the huge soldiers standing like great dumb animals before the small figure of Humai, waiting motionlessly for his orders.

HUMAI turned from the leader of the guards to Drake, still smiling agreeably.

"These soldiers are part of the personal bodyguard of the Caliph. They will escort you to him now." He waggled his round head seriously. "I advise you to go quietly."

Drake shoved Sharon behind him and stepped forward, his knees bent slightly, his hands clenched.

Humai murmured something under his breath to the great black who stood beside him and the creature started for Drake. Drake feinted to one side, pulling the black off balance, then he lunged for Humai. He wanted to get his hands on the little man's throat—for just a few seconds!

But the black was faster than his great bulk indicated. He wheeled like a panther and his huge arm whipped out, catching Drake about the waist.

He felt his feet leave the floor as the black jerked him into the air and held him there struggling helplessly.

Another of the guards caught Sharon's arms behind her back. She fought wildly, but he held her as if she were a child, his big round face stonily impassive.

Humai clucked his tongue and regarded Drake solemnly.

"You see?" he said, shrugging. "You wouldn't listen to me."

Drake stopped fighting against the inexorable grip of the giant black. His captor then set him down but his great hands still pinioned Drake's arms.

Humai spoke to the soldiers again and they came to attention, formed two columns and marched down the corridor, carrying Drake and Sharon along as if they were two dolls.

Humai followed, his eyes twinkling in the round, white expanse of his face.

The trip was like a nightmarish kaleidoscope to Drake. Their giant captors escorted them down the wide, high corridor, through vast palatial rooms that were adorned with golden statues and intricate fountains which threw lacy sprays of scented water high into the air, into other seemingly endless corridors and at last brought them to a stop before a mighty golden door, flanked on either side by gaudily uniformed sentries.

Humai spoke in a low voice to the sentries and one of them stepped forward and swung back the great golden door. The giant black guards moved forward again and Drake and Sharon were led into a huge, brilliantly lighted room with a vast domed ceiling.

The walls were dyed a deep crimson but the floor was of purest marble, white as a summer cloud and shot through with streaks of blue that were like delicate veins.

Within the room, reclining on silken couches, were dozens of richly clad men smoking from long ivory-stemmed pipes and drinking from glasses containing a dark liquid that filled the incense-laden air with spicy fragrance.

The black guards marched steadily toward the center of this magnificent room, glancing neither to the right nor the left.

IN THE middle of the vast hall was a raised dais; a throne of gleaming gold, jewel-encrusted and topped by a brilliant canopy of figured silk. On either side of the throne slim black boys stood waving great feathered fans that stirred the heavy languorous air with a sluggish motion. Steps covered with

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soft, luxurious carpets led to the dais, and on one of these steps were several slim girls, clad only in soft curled slippers and wisps of silk buckled about their white waists, lying in poses of voluptuous abandonment.

The giant black guards separated into two columns when they reached this throne and Drake and Sharon were suddenly face to face with the occupant of the dais—a great, bloated creature with sagging soft jowls and sprawling limbs, a man who stared at them sleepily with hard little eyes and breathed noisily through his loose pink lips. He lay rather than sat on the great cushioned dais, his legs sprawled loosely, his short pudgy arms resting carelessly on the rounded arms of the throne.

Humai stepped forward and bowed low.

"I have done my best to fulfill your wish, O mighty Caliph," he said. "You alone can judge whether this lowly servant has succeeded."

The gross creature on the throne waved a limp hand negligently at Humai in a weary gesture of dismissal, and the plump little man retreated several steps. The Caliph studied Drake for an instant with sharp little eyes; a slow frown creased his forehead.

"Who is this creature?" he asked. His voice was soft and throaty.

Humai stepped forward again, bowing submissively.

"I was forced to bring him with me, O illustrious Caliph," he murmured.

"I did not want a man," the Caliph said, waving his limp hand in a feeble gesture of irritation. "I asked you to find me a woman, a beautiful woman."

"And I did, O glorious Caliph," Humai said. "Look on her; fair as the morning when the sun's rays break over the purple mountain; as mysterious as the shrouded night when the stars hurl their shafts of light at the surging waters; as passionate as Love, itself. This is the woman I have brought to you, O exalted Caliph. This fairest flower of the future I brought to you to grace your own gardens forever."

The Caliph belched sleepily and turned his eyes to Sharon. She felt herself blushing as his sharp gaze moved over her slim body. A slow smile touched his sensual lips as he finally raised his eyes to Sharon's face. He studied her pale cheeks, crimsoned now with shame and anger, surveyed her flashing green eyes and red hair carefully and impersonally, as if she were an inanimate object he was considering buying.

"You have done well, Wizard," he said at last, to Humai.

"My grateful thanks are yours, O immeasurable Caliph," Humai said humbly. "May I die the instant I displease you."

"Have no fear," the Caliph said, absently scratching his great belly, "you will."

HE TURNED his bright gaze again to Drake.

"Why did you bring this creature?" he asked.

"He was her companion," Humai said. "When I transported her through the realm of Time he had his arm about her waist and thus was transported also."

The Caliph frowned.

"I do not like the thought of his arm about her waist," he said. "She is mine. She should have been keeping herself for me. You should have brought me a virgin, Wizard. You know my preferences."

"Just a minute," Sharon said angrily. "If you're implying that I'm not—"

"Silence, woman," the Caliph said softly. "You would not look well with

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your tongue torn out by its roots."

"I won't keep quiet," Sharon cried. "You're not going to talk about me as if I'm a loose woman and get away with it. And you're not going to talk about me like a piece of furniture. If you've got something to say to me, I'm standing right here and I've got two ears."

"Don't boast of such things," the Caliph said, "or you may lose them." He turned to Humai and rubbed his lips petulantly. "I did not want a chattering jay," he said fretfully. "I could do with a little less beauty and a little more silence."

Humai looked pale and distressed.

"I am so sorry, O mighty Caliph," he said miserably, "but there was no manner in which to determine that beforehand."

"If you'll pardon me," Drake said drily. "I'd like to ask you just what your object was in having us brought here. I am an accredited attaché of the United States diplomatic corps and, as such, I demand the right of being heard."

The Caliph put his plump hands to the sides of his head and rocked back and forth on the dais.

"Why does everyone want to talk?" he wailed. "I will go deaf with the noise." He took his hands down and gestured sharply to two of the giant blacks. "Take this noisy creature to a dungeon, the deepest one you can find, and lock him up there. Tomorrow I will have his tongue cut out."

Drake felt huge hands on his arms almost instantly. He struggled with all his strength but it was a futile effort. Sharon ran to his side and clung to him, until another of the blacks pulled her away and held her firmly.

"Oh, darling," she cried, fighting against the powerful grip of the giant black. "Make them kill us both. I don't want to live without you. Please—"

That was the last Drake heard. He was dragged through a side door of the great throne-room and it slammed behind him with a crash, shutting out the last piteous sound of Sharon's voice.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Drake was dragged from the room, the Caliph frowned at Sharon's sobbing figure, held helplessly in the grasp of the giant black guard.

"Take her to my harem attendants," he said, with a weary shake of his head. "Have her prepared for me. I wish to see her again tonight." He frowned darkly at Humai. "I am not pleased, miserable Wizard. There is too much noise and crying. If I remain displeased after tonight, I shall wish to see you again."

"Yes, O glorious Caliph," Humai muttered. With a forlorn bow he retreated from the throne.

Two of the black guards led Sharon from the great throne room and down several long winding corridors until they reached a large door guarded by a company of the Nubian giants. The door opened, Sharon was ushered into the room beyond, and the door closed with a dry, final click.

She looked around and saw that she was in a well-lighted room, much smaller than the one in which the Caliph had his throne. There were comfortable divans about the walls and in the air was the heady scent of fragrant perfumes.

A door on the side opened and two women, dressed in plain, knee-length cloaks, entered. One of them spoke sharply to the black guards and they withdrew with submissive bows.

"You must come with us," one of the women said to Sharon. She was a middle-aged woman with fine, delicate features and gleaming black hair faintly streaked with grey. "My name is

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Tana," she added. "I am in charge of the Caliph's harem. We must prepare you for tonight and there is not much time. Will you come along, please?"

Sharon realized that no point would be gained by resistance. She followed the women through a connecting corridor of pale marble to a room with couches against one wall and several padded tables in the center. At one end of the room was a sunken tub of black marble which was filled with clear, faintly scented water. There were mirrors on all walls, and an elaborate marble table near one wall was covered with pots of pastes and creams and long tubes of colored wax and rouge.

The room was furnished so exquisitely that Sharon couldn't help admiring the details of the appointments.

A door opened and three plainly dressed young girls entered.

"They will bathe you," Tana said. "When you are ready I will come and see that no detail has been overlooked." She inspected Sharon with a critical, experienced eye. "You will do," she murmured. "For one night you will be completely satisfactory, I am sure."

"Why only one night?"

Tana smiled sadly. "You will soon know," she said. With an impulsive gesture she patted Sharon's cheek shyly. "And you are so young," she murmured, turning away.

When she had gone, the three maidens went to work on Sharon. In spite of her protests they disrobed her, bathed her with soft fleecy cloths, massaged her body with pungent, vitalizing oils, lacquered her nails and completed the job of annointing her with subtle perfumes and threading a wreath of fresh flowers into her waving, shoulder-length hair.

THE three girls chattered among themselves as they brought clothes to her—rich, clinging silk robes that buckled with a diamond clasp at the waist and fell in billowing folds to the floor.

One of them knelt and fitted small jeweled slippers on her feet and they all stood back like artisans examining their work and stared at her with proud, possessive admiration.

"Please, girls," Sharon said, "I appreciate all this, but I'd much rather have a little information. What did Tana mean by saying I'd do for one night? She acted as if I were going to be killed tomorrow."

"But you are," one of the girl giggled. "Surely you know that."

Sharon felt a chill tremor run down her spine.

"What do you mean?" she cried. She shook her head distractedly, as the three girls continued to regard her with curious eyes. "I—I—can't die now," she said desperately. "There's a young man. He's in trouble. I've got to help him. Can't you girls help me get out of here? Won't you please?"

"We can do nothing," one of the girls said. She regarded Sharon with sad, solemn eyes and turned away slowly. "You must die tomorrow. That is the custom. The Caliph, Zinidad, will spend only one night with a girl. The next day she must die so that no other man will ever again possess her. We can do nothing to help you."

"But I've got to get away," Sharon said frantically. She stood up from the couch and desperately paced the length of the room. "I just can't die now."

The door opened and Tana entered.

"You look lovely," she murmured. "You are worthy of the great honor in store for you. You will come with me now. The Caliph is waiting your arrival with eagerness."

"He can keep right on waiting," Sharon said hotly. "I'm not going."

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She backed against a wall, her breasts heaving with anger. "You can tell your exalted tub of lard that he's just out of luck. I'm not going to him and he can't make me."

Tana's classic features were expressionless as she stepped to the wall and gently tapped a small gong. The clear note of the bell had hardly rippled away to silence before the door opened and two giant blacks appeared. Their huge faces were without expression as they regarded Tana.

She indicated Sharon with a nod of her head.

"Take her to the Caliph's private quarters. He is awaiting her," she murmured.

The blacks inclined their heads submissively and then moved toward Sharon. The girl backed away, her small fists clenched desperately.

The blacks moved stolidly toward her and she suddenly realized the futility of resistance. Her shoulders slumped wearily and she leaned tiredly against the wall.

"What's the use," she said bitterly and walked toward the giant Nubians.

Their faces were expressionless as they took her arms in their great hands and led her from the room . . .

THE CALIPH'S private boudoir was a magnificent affair, discreetly illuminated by scented candles, perfumed by pots of fragrant incense and dominated by a vast circular bed covered with soft shimmering silk and adorned by the fat, sprawling figure of the Caliph.

Sharon was led across the rug-draped, shining marble floor to the side of the great bed. They released her arms then, bowed ceremoniously to the Caliph and backed from the room, making low obeisances every few feet.

The door closed behind them and Sharon heard a bolt sliding into place with a sound of finality.

The Caliph opened his little eyes and peered at her. He was attired in a loose white cloak that looked like a Roman toga; and his face seemed almost lost in folds of flesh as he smiled slowly and sensually at her.

"Come to me, my child," he said.

Sharon crossed her arms. Her small jaw was set.

"I will not," she said distinctly.

The Caliph looked at her in injured surprise.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said," Sharon said firmly. "I was brought here by force, against my will. This is far as I go. If you try anything I'll scratch your eyes out."

The Caliph squirmed slightly. His fat, moon-like face wore an almost comic expression of bewilderment.

"You must not talk that way," he said, "Remember I am the Caliph. My words are law."

"Not with me they aren't," Sharon said grimly.

The Caliph heaved himself laboriously up on one elbow and regarded her with petulant surprise.

"May Allah protect us," he sighed, "from disobedient women."

"You're just too accustomed to having your own way," Sharon said. "Who gave you the right to order women around as if they were slaves?"

"But," the Caliph said, genuinely astonished, "what else are they?"

Sharon stamped her small foot in exasperation. She was becoming increasingly annoyed with the dictatorial old lecher.

"You're just like all men," she said hotly. "You think because you are women's physical superior that it gives you a divine right to dominate them mentally and spiritually. A woman is

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the equal of any man, anywhere, anytime. In fact they have more brains and skill than the average man. Where I came from women have fought for their rights and have proven themselves in all fields to be the equal of any male."

The Caliph shook his head ominously.

"Those are dangerous words," he said. What would happen to civilization if all women began thinking as you do?"

"What have men done by themselves," Sharon said, "other than wage wars and establish elaborate harem systems?"

ZINIDAD scratched his round head moodily.

"What have women done in this place you come from? Have they improved things?"

"Well," Sharon said, hesitating, "they haven't gotten everything straightened out yet, but they're on the right trail. We still have wars; but," she added defensively, "even in war women are proving themselves the equal of man. They can fly planes as well as any man."

"Fly planes?" Zinidad said wonderingly. "What are planes?"

"One of the inventions of my land," Sharon explained, "is a machine that flys through the air, miles above the ground, faster than any bird. It has revolutionized commerce, warfare and civilization."

Zinidad laughed delightedly.

"What a sport that must be," he cried. "Tell me more about these marvelous things." He smiled and wagged a plump finger playfully. "I know there is no truth in what you speak, but it amuses me to hear you tell of such wonderful things." He patted the edge of his silken bed. "Sit here beside me and tell me more of these fables."

Sharon sat down gingerly. She hoped that she had gotten the Caliph's mind off his original intentions, but she was ready to move quickly if she were wrong.

She sighed with relief when the Caliph lay back and closed his eyes, a peaceful smile on his face. "Tell me your fables," he murmured.

"All right," Sharon said. . . .

She talked for almost an hour, telling the Caliph of the world of the future, until finally she noticed that his eyes had closed and his breathing had become heavy and r e g u l a r. Sharon stopped speaking and watched the slumbering figure. Finally the Caliph began to snore, loudly and rythmically.

"Just like a man," Sharon thought disgustedly.

She realized then that she was tired. She thought of Drake but she knew there was nothing she could do to help him until the following day. She rose softly from the bed, careful not to disturb the Caliph and lay down on one of the thick, soft skins that decorated the marble floor. The room was warm and the heavy skin was luxuriously comfortable under her tired body.

She kicked off her slippers and in a few seconds was soundly asleep.

CHAPTER IV

DRAKE had been led from the presence of the Caliph by the giant black guards to a dark, dank dungeon in the bowels of the palace and left there, locked in a miserable cell, five feet by five without illumination or ventilation of any sort.

When he heard the ponderous footsteps of the guards departing, fading away into silence, he made a groping inspection of his quarters. There was a tiny trickle of running water in one

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corner that fell into a small open drain; and against the opposite wall a bundle of cold dirty rags was evidently a comfortless substitute for a cot.

He tried the door, but it was locked securely. He sat down then on the bundle of rags, turned his collar up about his neck against the damp chill of the place and settled down to wait developments.

They were not long in coming.

Hardly fifteen minutes had passed before he heard footsteps in the corridor and saw an edge of light under the door. A key clicked against metal and the door swung open; Humai, the plump Wizard, stood in the doorway, holding a lamp above his head.

"Greetings," he murmured. "May I come in?"

Drake got to his feet.

"Make yourself at home," he said sarcastically. "Take any chair you like. Would you care for a drink? something to eat?"

"You mustn't be bitter, my friend," Humai, said suavely. He stepped into the small cell and carefully closed the door behind him.

"Where is Sharon?" Drake demanded. "What are they going to do to her?"

Humai shrugged. "I don't know yet. Tonight she will spend with Zinidad, but after that—" He turned his palms out and shrugged again. "Who knows?"

Drake clenched his fists and stared helplessly at the heavy door and thick walls of his cell.

"Isn't there something I can do to help her?" he asked.

"We may all need help before long," Humai murmured. "You are scheduled for the water torture tomorrow. And if our Caliph's disposition doesn't improve very shortly he will also want to remove my venerable head."

"Possibly," Drake suggested, "we can work together."

Humai smiled. "I was thinking of something like that. I brought you two here to please the Caliph, but it hasn't quite worked out that way. After all my experiments and labors I have failed to please Zinidad. And in Bagdad that is fatal."

In spite of the desperate plight he was in, Drake couldn't suppress his curiosity in regard Humai's miraculous ability to pierce the planes of time and space.

"Just how did you work it?" he asked. "Time travel has been experimented with in the twentieth century but no one ever got beyond the theoretical stage."

"It was simple enough," Humai said. He smiled, his little eyes twinkling. "And I had a very powerful compulsion to stimulate me. The Caliph wished for women of the past and future and I was ordered to provide them for him. I worked for several years on my device and his patience was wearing very thin. If I hadn't succeeded on my last attempt it is doubtful that I would ever have gotten another chance."

"Were we the first to be honored with your attentions?" Drake asked drily.

Humai nodded.

"I chose the year nineteen-forty-three at random. But I made a miscalculation on my first attempt and landed in the year of nineteen-forty-four. I stayed just long enough to find out roughly what was going on before coming back to nineteen-forty-three."

HUMAI'S words caused a sudden quiver of excitement to race through Drake's veins.

"You were actually 'in' nineteen-forty-three?" he asked.

"Yes," said Humai.

Drake seized him by both arms.

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"Can you tell me of anything you saw?" he asked.

Humai frowned and stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"I didn't pay much attention," he said, "I listened to scraps of conversation, drifting here and there, but I wasn't awfully concerned about what was going on."

"You must remember something," Drake insisted.

"Oh, yes," Humai said, "I remember several things. For one, everyone was talking about a place called Dakar."

"Yes," Drake prompted anxiously. "what were they saying about Dakar?"

Humai squinted at the ceiling and frowned.

"They were saying something about an attack being launched from there toward a place called Brazil."

Drake snapped his fingers suddenly.

"Of course, of course," he said tensely. "Do you remember anything else?

Humai thought for a moment and then shook his round head deliberately.

"No," said he decisively. "That was all the people were talking about. Everyone seemed quite concerned about it."

"Had the attack succeeded?" Drake asked quickly.

"Oh, yes," Humai said. "I gathered that it had been quite a thorough success. That was why everyone was so concerned. It seems they hadn't expected anything like that."

"Of course they hadn't!" Drake said bitterly. "What stupid fools we were."

He began to pace the narrow cell, his clenched hands jammed into his pockets. Humai's news had shocked him from the thought of his own predicament.

The Germans had struck—or would strike in '44—at South America from Dakar. And that attack was going to succeed unless something could be done to warn the Allied leaders of its impending threat.

He wheeled suddenly on Humai.

"I've got to get out of here," he said fiercely. "I've got to get back to my own time."

"I'm afraid that is quite impossible," Humai said. "The time device has not been prepared for another trip as yet; and that is liable to take quite some time."

"How long?" Drake demanded.

"I don't really know," Humai said. "But," he added, smiling gently, "only one person at a time can make the trip. And if the Caliph's present unfriendly attitude toward me continues, I know who that one person is going to be. I will have to use the time device to save myself from his wrath. That may be my only possibility of escaping."

"But you don't understand," Drake cried. "It's absolutely imperative that I get back. Or, if only one can go, send the girl back. I'll stay here—gladly. But one of us has to get back with the information you've given me."

Humai chuckled softly.

"It is useless to talk," he murmured. "I—"

THE cell door behind him suddenly swung slowly open. Humai stopped in mid-sentence when he heard the creak of the hinges. He turned slowly to the door, his face bland, impassive, unrevealing.

Drake was staring at the woman who stood in the doorway. She was tall, with fine skin and dark smouldering eyes. Her hair was black as a raven's wing, except for a spot at each temple that looked as if it had been brushed lightly with silver dust. She wore a crimson robe that buckled at her throat with a huge diamond clasp and fell in straight, classic folds to the

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ground. The points of her small golden slippers were visible under the hem of her cloak.

Humai inclined his head slightly toward the woman.

"It is indeed a surprise to see you here, O beautiful Tana."

Tana regarded him calmly but there was a faint enigmatic smile at the corners of her curving mouth.

"I, too, am surprised," she murmured. "I had hoped to talk to the prisoner alone. It is a pity that you must leave so soon, my dear Humai."

"Some things cannot be helped," Humai sighed. He turned and smiled softly at Drake. "I will speak to you again, my friend."

He bowed ceremoniously to Tana and then padded from the cell, closing the door gently behind him.

Tana waited until his footsteps had faded down the corridor before turning to Drake. Her deep thoughtful eyes regarded him searchingly.

"I am Tana," she said softly, when her inspection was completed. "I am the mistress of the Caliph's harem. I wish to talk to you."

"Everyone seems to have that idea tonight," Drake said, without humor. "There's not much I can do but listen. What is it you want?"

"I think perhaps you and I can come to an understanding," Tana said. "I can offer you your freedom if you are willing to help me."

Drake smiled at her.

"Every bargain has two parts," he said. "What is it you want me to do?"

"You are hardly in a position to bargain," Tana said.

Drake shrugged. "I think I'm in a pretty good position," he said. "You obviously need me or you wouldn't be here. Supposing you tell me the whole story."

TANA hesitated momentarily. Her fine, delicate features were expressionless, but there was a wary glint in her deep eyes.

"I can't tell you everything," she said finally. "Years ago when I was young and had the enticements of youth to offer our Caliph, I was his favorite and confidant. When he was through with me he didn't put me to death as was his usual custom. My influence with him was strong enough to prevent him from delivering me to his royal torturers. Instead he appointed me mistress of his harem, where I serve as the custodian and servant to his precious little creatures." She paused and Drake noticed that her white cheeks were stained with red spots of anger. "I, Tana, who once lived like the queen of Bagdad and with whom ministers and princes vied for favor, was relegated to a position of a servant. Zinidad knew that would be worse than death for me and it has been. The humiliation and baseness of my state is as intolerable as the water torture would have been."

"A tough break," Drake said sympathetically, "but how does all this affect me?"

"I have never given up my dream of ruling Bagdad," Tana continued, ignoring his interruption. "Never in the blackest moments of despair have I ceased to hope, to strive, to fight for what is my rightful position. I have made friends, powerful friends with wealth and influence, who know that my knowledge of the Caliph can be valuable to them. There is much dissatisfaction in Bagdad now. The people are over-burdened with oppressive taxes; there is open grumbling in the markets and streets. The time is right for a bold stroke that will break forever the influence of Zinidad. The time has come to revolt!"

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"Sounds like it might be," Drake said. "But the only difference between a revolt and a revolution is success. Will your revolt succeed? The Caliph has armies, I presume. What of them?"

"The main battle must be won here in the castle of the Caliph," Tana said. "Once the private guards of the Caliph are defeated and he is killed, the people will welcome a new Caliph. The army will defer to the wish of the people. Not only *can* a revolt succeed, it will succeed!"

"I'm still in the dark about what you want me for," Drake said.

"I will tell you," Tana said quietly. "Your companion from the world of the future, the beautiful red-haired girl called Sharon, is in a position to help us immensely."

AT THE mention of Sharon's name, all of Drake's desperate anxiety returned.

"Where is she?" he demanded. "What has that pot-bellied lecher done to her?"

"Nothing," Tana said. "That I can promise. I saw their first meeting. I observed what happened from a small hidden peep-hole which I installed for the purpose of spying on the Caliph. She talked to him for several hours, telling him stories of the strange land from which both of you came. The Caliph finally went to sleep and the girl then lay down on a rug on the floor and did likewise. I know, however, that the Caliph is not through with her. He will want to see her again, to hear more of her strange stories. Thus, for the time, she is safe and in a position close to the Caliph where she can do us much good. If," Tana smiled slowly, "she can be persuaded to help us with our plan."

"Ah," Drake said, "I begin to see. That's where I come in. I'm to persuade Sharon to help us toss the Caliph into the discard. Is that right?"

"Yes," Tana said.

"And for that I receive my freedom?"

"Yes."

"And Sharon?" Drake asked. "Will she also receive her freedom?"

Tana hesitated, then shrugged.

"If you wish it," she said. "That is a matter of no concern to me. Now what do you say? Freedom for both of you if you help me. If not," she smiled, "you may take your chances on the tender mercies of the royal torturers."

"There's only one answer," Drake said. "I'm not a bit interested in your internal problems, but I do want freedom for myself and Sharon. I'll do what I can with her. How can I arrange to see her?"

"I will arrange that," Tana said. "She will be brought here tomorrow morning."

"What precisely do you want her to do?" Drake asked.

"I will tell you later. First talk to her and get her promise to help. Our plans are not quite complete. My main support will come from the mighty bandit, Ali Baba, who will provide me with the men to conquer the Caliph's guards. When we are ready to strike, I will tell you what the red-haired girl must do. That will be soon enough for her to know."

"All right," Drake said. "How soon will it be before I have my freedom?"

"There need be no delay about that," Tana said. "When you have talked to the red-haired one in the morning, I will come to you, bringing you suitable clothes and arms. The guards will be easy to handle. You shall go free then and hide in the hills with Ali Baba until we are ready to strike."

She turned and moved to the door.

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"Keep silent of all I have told you," she murmured.

She opened the door and when it closed behind her, Drake heard heavy bolts sliding into place.

CHAPTER V

DRAKE slept fitfully that night in the dank, odorous cell. There was no change in the gloomy darkness to indicate the rising of the sun and the passage of the hours. His stomach told him he had been a long time without food when he awoke, but he couldn't tell if it were five in the morning or noon. He was not awake long before he heard steps outside his cell and then the bolts clanged back and the door opened.

Two guards entered, one of them holding a smoking lamp and the other carrying a bowl of food and a pot of warm goat's milk which he set on the floor.

Without a look at Drake, the two huge blacks left the cell, closing and locking the door behind them. Drake was left again in the darkness. He groped his way to the food and managed to eat enough of it to satisfy his hunger. The goat milk he left untouched.

He had just finished his meal when the door opened again and the same guards entered. One of them removed the empty dish and the bowl of milk while the other motioned Drake to his feet.

Drake got up and a small, almost naked little boy pattered into the cell carrying in his hands a pot of fragrant incense. He set it down in a corner and then stepped to one side of the doorway, salaaming low, until his forehead almost brushed the floor.

The giant black came to attention on the other side of the doorway, his great dark moon of a face impassive.

Drake heard another step in the corridor, a light, quick step, and then Sharon was standing in the doorway, looking incredibly radiant in a floating white gown that was set with hundreds of lustrous, milk-white pearls.

"Darling!" he cried. He stepped toward her, but the great black put his massive hand against his chest and held him back.

"Hey, what's the ideal?" Drake said.

"I'll get rid of them," Sharon said.

She nodded imperiously to the great black guard and to the little boy and clapped her hands. Then she pointed to the door.

The brown, little boy smiled, salaamed and ducked through the door, followed by the giant guard. When their footsteps faded Sharon closed the door and then came quickly across the floor to Drake.

"Oh, darling," she whispered, "I've been so worried about you."

Drake took her in his arms and smiled into her eyes.

"You needn't have been," he said. "You were the one who was in a bad spot."

"You'll never believe what happened," Sharon said, "I—"

Drake nodded. "Tana told me all about your stalling the Caliph with stories of the twentieth century."

"Tana?" Sharon said. "The harem mistress? How did you see her? And how did she know?"

"I've got a lot to tell you," Drake said. "And not too much time, so listen carefully."

AS QUICKLY as possible he told Sharon what had happened since he had been dragged from her side in Zinidad's throne room. When he finished, her face was radiant with excitement.

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"But can we trust her, Drake," she asked worriedly. "She is guaranteeing us our freedom, but we have nothing but her word on that."

Drake shrugged.

"Beggars can't be choosers; we've got to play ball with her, or else."

"I suppose you're right," Sharon said. "But she didn't say what she wanted me to do, did she?"

"No," Drake said, "she didn't."

"I don't know how long I'll be able to keep Zinidad interested in my stories," Sharon said. "I'm afraid he's liable to slip back into character any time. He was very pleasant this morning in a fatherly sort of way."

"Well, it's your job to keep him from feeling any younger than a father," Drake said.

"I'll try," Sharon said. "I've got to be going now. You will take care of yourself, won't you, darling?"

"You bet," Drake said determinedly, "and you too. We've got to get out of this place and get back to the twentieth century. I'm not forgetting for a minute that our first job is to get the information of the Nazi attack on South America into the hands of our State Department."

Sharon stood on tiptoes to kiss Drake goodby, then turned and left the tiny cell. The guards in the corridor bowed to her and locked the door after she had gone.

And Drake settled down to wait. . . .

SEVERAL hours passed before the bolts on the door were drawn again, and this time it was Tana who entered, carrying a bundle of clothes over her arm.

"Put these on as quickly as possible," she told him. "We have drugged the guards, but they may come to any minute. I'll keep watch in the corridor. Hurry!"

When she stepped out of the cell Drake quickly stripped off his own clothes and climbed into the ones she had brought him. He kicked off his patent leather shoes and slipped his feet into comfortable slippers of well-cured leather. Trousers and blouse went on quickly and a veiled turban completed his attire.

When he stepped into the corridor Tana handed him a belt from which a curved scimitar hung.

"Put this on," she whispered, "you may need it."

Three of the great black guards were stretched on the floor beside the cell, breathing heavily.

Tana glanced at them and then beckoned Drake to follow her.

"We must hurry," she said quietly. "When the Nubian guards are discovered there will be a great outcry. We must be far from here by that time."

Drake followed Tana for several hundred yards of the winding dark tunnels that honeycombed the bowels of the palace and led gradually up to ground level. When they reached a section of the tunnel where they could feel fresh drafts of air and see sunlight slanting in the barred apertures at the top of the corridor, Tana led him quickly to an unlocked door that opened on one of the rear courts of the palace.

Drake blinked in the strong sunlight as she threw open the door and led him outside. Two great camels were waiting a few feet from the door. A stable boy held their bridles. At a signal from Tana the boy brought the beasts to their knees and she swung herself into the saddle and motioned Drake to do likewise.

The stable boy scampered away as Tana took the reins and pulled the great beast to its feet. Drake's camel lurched upright, with a sickening lurching mo-

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tion, of its own accord.

"They are well trained," Tana said absently. "They are from the royal stables. There is no creature of the desert that can keep up with them."

As she spoke she threw her veil across her face and pulled her cloak tightly over her shoulders.

"You had better do the same," she said to Drake. "I have chosen a route that will not take us through the populated sectors of the city, but we must be very careful not to be recognized."

Drake drew the veil over his face.

"All set," he said.

THE sun was almost half way across a startlingly blue sky, beating down with heavy hot force, as their camels moved slowly from the deserted courtyard, under the great arched gate that led to the wide avenue which flanked the palace.

They rode quickly through the winding streets of Bagdad, past several jammed market places, and soon they were on the great wide road that from Bagdad to the open stretches of the desert. They followed this road for several miles, moving aside on several occaisions to allow long in-coming caravans to pass, and at last they reached the desert and started out on its broad, trackless, shimmering wastes.

This much of the ride had been taken in absolute silence. Tana seemed to know exactly what she was doing and where she was going and apparently felt no need to explain her course to Drake.

When the sun was beginning to sink into the west, she pointed the camels toward a range of mountains which had been but a blue blur on the horizon when they left Bagdad, but which were now looming up as individual peaks stretching in an unbroken chain for dozens of miles.

Drake marveled at the woman's endurance. His back was almost broken from the heavy lurching of his mount and his tongue was a piece of leather in his mouth. Particles of sand, whirled by the arid desert blasts, stung his face and neck and sifted into his clothes until he felt as if he were clothed in sheets of sanded paper.

But Tana rode on, saying nothing, looking neither to the right nor left, apparently oblivious to the merciless discomforts of the trip; and Drake clamped his lips together obstinately and resolved that he'd ride until his camel fell rather than ask for a rest.

When they reached the foot of the mountain peaks Tana led him through a narrow gorge into bewildering mazes of valleys and fissures that split the mountain into thousands of separate ridges, until he knew he was hopelessly and completely lost.

She rode on until they reached the blank face of an escarpment and Drake thought she was going to drive the camels straight into its flinty side; but a few feet from the sheer towering wall, she brought her camel to a halt.

Drake's mount came to a stop beside hers. Drake shifted his position in the hard saddle and glanced around. They were on the floor of a shallow basin, surrounded on all sides by towering cliffs. One narrow fissure led into this small, rock-floored valley and Drake knew it would take an army searching the mountains to find the place.

"This is as far as we go," Tana said.

Drake looked at her, perplexed.

Tana swung about and faced the blank face of the cliff.

"Open Sesame!" she called in a clear loud voice.

For an instant only the echo of her words drifted to their ears rebounding from the sheer sides of the mountain.

But then Drake heard a sudden

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rumbling sound as if two huge boulders were being ground together, and an instant later, a great slab of stone moved slowly away from the side of the cliff, revealing a gaping black hole, fifty feet wide and half as high.

"Come," Tana said, "This is the cave of Ali Baba."

Her camel moved ahead and Drake's followed it into the solid darkness of the hole in the side of the cliff.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN they entered the cave they turned right after few dozen feet and entered a large room, formed from the natural rock of the mountain. Torches guttered in niches in the wall, throwing a wierd illumination over the great hall. The floor was covered with the tanned hides of animals.

There were a half dozen men lying about on the floor and one of them climbed to his feet as Tana slid from her mount to the floor.

He was a colorfully dressed fellow of medium height with a thin brown face and snapping black eyes. A scimitar hung from his waist and a wicked looking dagger was jammed into the sash of his trousers.

"Greetings, Tana," he said.

"Greetings, Ali Baba," Tana said. "I have brought you the one I spoke about." She turned and nodded to Drake. "You may dismount. You will stay here for a while, until things are ready and we need you."

Drake slid gratefully to the ground and stretched his aching muscles.

"We need food and drink," Tana said.

Ali Baba turned and waved a hand at one of the men lying on the animal skins.

"Mura," he called, "prepare food for our guests. Hurry!"

"I shall have to return immediately," Tana said, "but I have news which you will like. We strike within the week. Everything has been arranged."

Ali Baba's thin brown face burned with cupidity. He chuckled softly, deep in his throat.

"You bring very good news," he said. "But how are my men and I to get into the castle?"

Tana smiled softly.

"You will be delivered to the Caliph's door, my gentle Ali Baba. I have contacted an oil dealer who has a contract to deliver forty casks of olive oil to the palace next week. The casks are huge and each could easily hold a man. Do you understand?"

"Ah!" Ali Baba murmured. He inclined his head toward Tana, his eyes sharp and bright. "I bow to your cleverness, Tana. But are you sure that forty men and myself will be sufficient to subdue the palace guards of the Caliph?"

"You have my assurance for that," Tana said.

After they had eaten a coarse, but satisfying, meal in the vast, smoky dining-hall, Tana mounted her camel and, after a last word with Ali Baba, left for the return trip to Bagdad.

Drake was filled with a growing wonder as he contemplated the weird fate that had befallen him. And no small part of his wonder was a result of his meeting with Ali Baba, the thief, in this rocky hidden cavern. He had always believed Ali Baba to have been a completely mythical character from the pages of the *Arabian Nights;* and it was a shock to discover that the man had actually existed.

WHEN Tana had gone Ali Baba asked him if he would like to rest.

"Sounds like a good idea," Drake said. "I'm pretty tired from the trip.

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But I notice it didn't seem to bother Tana particularly."

Ali Baba smiled, but there was an uneasy glint in his eye that puzzled Drake.

"That woman," he said, "is like a creature of rock. Her heart is like a piece of tough leather." He shook his head slowly. "I would not like to have her for my enemy."

"The same thought has occurred to me," Drake said drily.

Ali Baba looked at him moodily.

"I hope I never have to fight against her," he said. "She is like a tigress when aroused."

"There's no need to worry," Drake said. "She needs you as much as you need her. She can't afford to have you turn against her."

"I hope you are right," Ali Baba said. He frowned dubiously and regarded Drake with his sharp brown eyes. "I like you," he said unexpectedly. "You speak words of good sense. Would you be interested in inspecting my little domain?"

"Very much," Drake said.

Ali Baba led him from the dining-hall through the rest of the series of connecting caves, explaining as they went what each section was used for. There were sleeping rooms, stalls for camels and horses, workshops where harnesses and weapons were repaired, and several vast storerooms stocked with dried foods, casks of wine and shelves of clothing and equipment of all types and sorts.

"You see," Ali Baba explained, "we must be self-sufficient. Frequently when the Caliph's soldiers are searching the mountains for us, we must hide here in our caves for weeks at a time before it is safe to venture forth."

They had reached the last of the caves and Ali Baba led him to a great massive stone door that was locked and bolted securely.

"I will show you something now that few have ever seen," he said. "Possibly you have wondered about our main gate and the password 'Sesame' which is needed to open it?"

"Yes, I have," Drake said. "It looked like witchcraft to me."

"It is nothing like that," Ali Baba smiled.

He unlocked the heavy door, swung it back and started down steps carved in the heavy rock. "Follow me," he said.

Drake started down the steps after the bandit chieftan, moving carefully in the dark. After several winding turns he saw a flicker of illumination below that threw a dappled light on the steps beneath his feet.

Ali Baba made the last turn and stepped out on a small balcony. When Drake joined him he saw he was overlooking a vast chamber, fully as large as any of the great caves that he had seen above.

In the center of the room, a massive, heavy-spoked wheel was set on a pivot in the floor; and Drake's hands suddenly tightened with horror as he saw that to each spoke was chained a filthy, rag-covered human being.

THE dazed broken figures hung over the spokes, as lifeless as pieces of wood. Their physical degradation was appalling. Hair hung over their eyes and thin shoulders and their ribs stuck out cadaverously through their scanty, torn rag coverings.

"You see," Ali Baba said, "there is nothing mysterious about our little secret. Watch!"

He clapped his hands together and said, "Open Sesame!"

Instantly the broken, shambling figures began to stir. Their eyes did not lift to the sound of Ali Baba's voice, but

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their muscles contracted, automatically, instinctively.

They laid their weight against the spokes and gradually, ponderously, the great wheel began to turn. The shackled figures strained forward soundlessly and the only noise that broke the gruesome, unnatural silence was the scraping of their unshod feet on the stone floor. When the wheel had completed a half circle, the shackled figures stopped, like obedient horses anticipating a command from a master.

"You see?" Ali Baba said. He clapped his hands again. "Close Sesame!" he said.

The men resumed their task, straining their frail, broken figures against the spokes until the great wheel had completed its circle; then they relaxed and slumped against the spokes, lifeless, motionless, senseless—waiting until again the command of "Sesame" should penetrate their dull, fogged brains and flag their muscles into automatic response.

"What do you think?" Ali Baba asked. "Is it not clever? These husks you see on the wheel are those who sought to betray me, and who were unlucky enough to fall into my hands. After a few years on the wheel even the most independent spirit learns that revolt and resistance are useless. Gradually they adapt themselves to their task until they become as obedient horses. They have but one task; they know but one command; and they do their work well."

"I think it's a criminal way to treat human beings," Drake said grimly. "A knife through the back would be more merciful."

"Possibly," Ali Baba shrugged, "but a dead man is of no use to anyone, not even to himself. This way these creatures are able to perform some service."

"Yes," Drake said, "but you could put them to work making an automatic leverage system that would open your gate just as effectively."

Ali Baba shrugged again.

"Maybe there is something in what you say. But let us not worry about it now. For the present this system is satisfactory. Now you must rest."

Drake followed Ali Baba back to the main sections of the cavern, and was taken to a small room with a soft, skin-covered floor. He was tired and aching in every muscle but it was a long time before sleep came. He couldn't rid his mind of the picture of the helpless, broken figures on the wheel that operated the main gate of the bandit's cave.

THREE days passed in the caverns of Ali Baba, the thief, and Drake grew increasingly impatient as hour followed hour and there was no news from Tana. He slept and ate and talked interminably with Ali Baba, but his anxiety for Sharon prevented him from relaxing. The problem of how he was to effect their escape from this time to the twentieth century with the news of the German invasion of South America was another nagging worry that never completely left him.

But on the fourth day a messenger arrived, and soon after Ali Baba sought Drake out, his sharp brown eyes snapping with excitement.

"The period of waiting is over," he announced. "Tana has sent us word that everything is prepared for us. We will leave within the hour for Bagdad. Tonight we make our entrance into the palace of the Caliph."

"It's about time," Drake said.

"The wise man is patient," Ali Baba said quietly. "We have waited long but our time to strike has come."

"I hope Tana has everything set," Drake said. "Supposing the guards of

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the Caliph are more powerful than we expect? What then?"

"The future is in the hands of Allah," Ali Baba said philosophically. "If we fail, we shall have no more worries at all after a while. The Caliph, Zinidad, will see to that. But enough of this talk. The time is here for action. Prepare yourself to ride, my comrade. The wealth of Bagdad awaits us."

CHAPTER VII

THE moon was a pale thin crescent hanging against the velvet blackness of the night sky when the long line of tired, laden camels reached the great gates of the Caliph's palace.

The custodian of the gate signalled the wall guards and then advanced to meet the leader of the caravan.

"Who is it disturbs the sleep of the Caliph's palace in the middle of the night?" he challenged.

"It is Raschid, the merchant," the leader of the caravan, a gnarled, stooped little man, answered sullenly. "Open the gate, uncivil dog! I have forty barrels of oil for the Caliph's storehouses."

"Who told you to bring them at this hour?" the custodian demanded. "The palace is asleep. Come back with the honest sun tomorrow and I will open the gate for you."

"The Mistress Tana directed me to bring them at this hour," Raschid said stubbornly. "If I leave now you will be answering her questions on the rack tomorrow."

The custodian fumbled with his beard for a moment and then angrily ordered the gate-keeper to open the barrier.

"Let this be on your head," he bellowed to Raschid.

"Stop your braying, brother of the swine," Raschid shouted. "Stand aside and let honest men work."

He turned and shouted an order to his camel drivers and soon the long caravan of lumbering beasts was filing into the dark courtyard of the Caliph's palace.

Drake had heard the entire conversation, and when he felt the camels begin to move he breathed a sigh of relief. Everything was working according to plan.

He was crouched in one of the huge leather oil barrels that swung from the sides of the camels. And in each of the remaining barrels was one of Ali Baba's men, thoroughly armed and ready to spring into action at an instant's notice.

The camel train moved slowly across the court and the only sound in the blackness of the night was the solid scraping slump of the camels' hoofs on the hard-packed dirt floor of the court yard.

Finally the camels came to a sluggish stop and the caravan attendants began unloading the oil barrels and carrying them into the Caliph's store house.

Drake felt the barrels in which he was concealed being lifted and carried into the dark storeroom. The attendants grunted with every step and sighed relievedly when they set the barrel down on the floor.

The half dozen attendants repeated this procedure until all the barrels were delivered, then they mounted their camels and left the palace.

The doors of the storeroom were closed by the Caliph's men, and Drake felt the darkness and silence close over him with an almost physical weight.

For several moments he heard nothing and then Ali Baba's voice—a soft whisper from the adjoining barrel—reached his ears.

"Drake?"

"Yes?"

"All is going well. We must wait

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here until Tana sends her messenger for us."

"How long will that be?"

"Allah knows, my friend. We can but wait."

MINUTES passed slowly. The air was close and stifling. Suddenly he heard the sound of a door opening slowly. An instant later the whisper of stealthy movements came to his ears. And he heard the ominous clink of arms.

Puzzled and alarmed, he raised himself until he could peer over the top of the barrel. Through the murky darkness he saw a group of men moving toward the line of oil barrels. He could vaguely make out the huge shapes of Nubian guards; and he saw the gleam of their scimitars as they advanced with cat-like tread.

Drake felt a beaded rim of sweat break on his forehead. This certainly wasn't according to plan. These advancing Nubians hardly looked like messengers from Tana.

"Ali Baba!" he hissed.

"What is it?" Ali Baba whispered.

"Take a peek over the top. I think we're in for trouble."

Dimly he saw Ali Baba's head emerge from the top of the barrel and he heard the sudden, sharp intake of his breath.

"Allah aid us! We have been betrayed!"

Ali Baba's hoarse whisper sent a chill racing down Drake's spine.

The next instant Ali Baba sprang from the barrel, gleaming sword in hand.

"Arise, my men!" he shouted. "We have been tricked. The Caliph's guards are here. Slay the great brutes. Arise, men, and fight!"

There were astounded shouts from Ali Baba's men and a great roar from the Nubians as they rushed forward, swinging their great scimitars with vicious, destructive strokes.

Drake leaped from his barrel and was almost decapitated on the spot by the swishing stroke of a gleaming blade. He ducked low and the knife cut air with a vicious screech, not an inch above his head.

He drove his knee into the groin of the huge black and heard the man gasp in pain. Still crouched, he smashed two hard blows into the black's stomach that were backed with every atom of his weight and strength.

The giant fell backward, crying out in a stricken voice and sobbing for breath. His great blade dropped to the floor with a clatter.

A hand grasped his arm and Ali Baba's voice was in his ear.

"Come with me. It is useless to stay and fight. We have not a chance."

Drake glanced quickly down the line of fighting, struggling men and he saw that what Ali Baba said was true. Most of his men had been caught without a chance. Before they could climb from the barrels and free their arms, the giant blacks were upon them, slaying them mercilessly with their slashing scimitars. Those who had managed to get out of the barrels were being helplessly forced backward by the superior weight and numbers of their giant adversaries.

A BLACK entered from a doorway carrying a huge flaming torch, and instantly the wild scene was bathed with flickering, ghostly illumination.

And by that illumination Drake saw Tana enter and regard the massacre with cold hard eyes. She wore a great crimson cloak and with her white cruel face, fathomless eyes and gleaming black hair, thrown into relief by the flaming torch, she looked like the wife of Satan.

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She stood in the doorway, a slim, cold, unmoved figure, watching the savage carnage with a hard, mocking smile on her face, and a flicker of ironic amusement in her deep eyes.

And Drake knew then who the traitor had been; but he didn't know why this cold terrible woman had betrayed them.

Ali Baba tugged at his arm again.

"Follow me!" he cried. "It is death to stay."

Drake needed no more urging.

He darted after Ali Baba toward another door. He heard Tana's cold voice rise over the tumult, and a glance over his shoulder showed two of the blacks charging after them, eating the ground with their giant strides.

Ali Baba tugged frantically at the door.

"It is stuck!" he gasped. "Allah save us! We are lost."

"Keep trying," Drake snapped. He wheeled to face the three charging giants. He knew he would stand no chance of saving himself from death, but even a second's delay might give Ali Baba a chance.

He ducked the first savage blow of the leading giant and dove at the man's legs. His hip struck the black's knees squarely and the huge creature sprawled forward, his own momentum and weight smashing him to the floor with bone-shattering force. The second guard tried to check his speed and, failing, sprawled over the prostrate form of his companion.

Drake was numb from the waist down because of the terrific impact. He tried to crawl to his feet, but before he could even get to his knees, the blacks had regained their feet with the agility of great cats and were upon him—bearing him to the floor under their weight.

They seized his wrists and jerked him to his feet. He didn't bother to struggle. In their terrible hands he was helpless as a baby.

One of the blacks raised his fist and brought it down against his temple and all sound and light faded from his brain into a morass of blackness. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Drake felt consciousness filtering back to him he was first conscious of a terrible ache in his head, and then a dragging bumping sensation as if he were being hauled between two horses over a bumpy road.

He opened his eyes and when he was able to focus them he realized that he was in the grip of the two Nubians who had captured him and was being dragged across the rough floor of the storeroom.

The blacks carried him through an open door, across the drafty black courtyard, and finally, after an interminable trip through the mazes of the palace they halted at the great golden doors which he remembered led to the Caliph's throne room.

The gates were swung back and the guards started forward again, dragging him unceremoniously across the luxurious marble floor of the throne room and finally releasing him before the great throne of Zinidad. Drake almost collapsed when they took their hands from him, but he forced himself to straighten and stand erect before the throne.

Zinidad was sprawled on his great silken pillow, regarding him with wrathful expectancy. At his side stood Tana, tall, proud, cold, her white face as devoid of emotion as a marble statue.

"Drake!" a soft, anxious voice beside him said. "Are you all right? Look at me, please!"

Drake turned his aching head with an effort. Sharon was standing at one

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side, several feet away. He noticed dully that her arms were bound behind her back. She wore a long, flowing white gown buckled at her waist, and her hair fell to her bare shoulders in disarray. Her face and eyes were anxious.

"Please," she said again, "are you all right, darling?"

"I guess so," Drake muttered. He shook his head and some of the cobwebs disappeared. "I feel all right."

"That is fine." Zinidad interrupted their conversation with a soft chuckle. "I am very glad you are feeling all right. I am glad both of you feel all right, because in a little while you will not be feeling so good. You will know then how unwise it is to cross the kind Caliph, Zinidad." He turned and smiled affectionately at Tana. "If it had not been for my little Tana your clever plot might have succeeded. But Tana is loyal; Tana is grateful for the many things I have done for her. And I will not forget this new evidence of her loyalty."

Tana inclined her head slowly.

"I am happy serving you, O generous Caliph."

Drake understood then the reason behind Tana's betrayal. She had never intended to sponsor a genuine revolt against the Caliph. She had simply engineered one and then, by informing Zinidad of what was to happen, had earned his undying gratitude. She had sacrificed Ali Baba, his men, and Sharon and him, so that she gained again a position of influence close to the Caliph.

And it looked as if her clever, ruthless plan had succeeded completely.

DRAKE looked at her with blazing contempt. She returned his gaze calmly, mockingly with the merest hint of a scornful smile at the edges of her thin, curving lips.

"I am surprised at my little story teller," Zinidad said sadly, regarding Sharon and wagging his fat head slowly. "I did not think she would join my enemies to betray me." He pursed his soft, lecherous lips and smiled gently. "As much as it pains me, I must see that you share the same fate as the others." He turned languidly to Drake. "And you, my clever friend, I must ask you where the thieving scoundrel Ali Baba is."

This was the first indication Drake had that Ali Baba had escaped.

"I don't know where he is," he said.

"We will find him wherever he is," Zinidad murmured. "And now you two unfortunate people must pay for your crimes." He clapped his soft hands together. "Take them to our pleasant torture chamber and make them comfortable," he said to the guards who stepped to Drake's side. "But," he added, with a roguish shake of his finger, "don't be too hasty with the procedure. We want our guests to enjoy themselves for several days."

The guards bowed impassively, took Drake's arms in their huge hands and led him toward the door. Sharon followed behind him, escorted by two more guards. . . .

DRAKE and Sharon were led to a room deep in the bowels of the palace, which, judging from the unpleasant looking instruments and racks that adorned the place, was used as the Caliph's private torture chamber.

They were shackled to walls, hands above their heads, facing each other about eight feet apart. The guards withdrew then, closing and locking the heavy, barred door after them.

The position was not particularly uncomfortable, but, Drake realized it would become very monotonous as

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the hours passed.

"This looks like the end," he said bitterly. "We haven't got a chance of getting out, now." He tugged desperately, futilely, at the iron gyves that secured his wrists. "It's no use. I don't give a damn about myself, but thinking about you almost drives me out of my head."

"Let's don't give up yet," Sharon said. "Something may turn up yet. And stop worrying about me." She threw her shining red hair back from her forehead with a toss of her head. "I'm not going to give them any satisfaction."

"That's the spirit, honey," Drake said. He was silent a moment, thinking of Tana. "That witch!" he finally said explosively. "She certainly sold us down the river in neat style."

"It's too bad it happened just when it did," Sharon said moodily. "I had the Caliph right under my thumb. He was so intrigued with the stories I told him that he was willing to do anything for me. If Tana hadn't turned rat on us I might have talked him into letting us go."

"Well, there'd still be the problem of getting back to our own time," Drake said. "The wizard, Humai, controls the time machine and he was getting ready to use it himself to get away from the Caliph. I wonder if he's gone yet."

"No, he's still around," Sharon said. "I've seen him several times. He was very respectful to me because he knew I was the Caliph's favorite." She smiled ruefully. "Queen for a day, that's me."

The bolts on the heavy door suddenly rasped; Drake glanced warningly at Sharon.

The door swung open and Tana, tall, cold and imperious, walked into the room and faced them, her thin face hard and expressionless. The door closed behind her.

She flicked her eyes from Sharon to Drake; a mocking smile touched her lips.

"Comfortable?" she asked, amusement in her voice.

"As comfortable as possible," Drake said, "considering the company."

TANA glared angrily at him, her reserve shattered for an instant. She breathed hard and spots of color touched her pale cheeks.

"You won't be quite so spirited in a few more hours," she said harshly.

"Is that what you came here to tell us?" Drake asked sarcastically.

Tana smiled. "As a matter of fact, no. I came here again to bargain with you. You are in even a worse position now than you were on the first occasion."

"But I have the benefit of experience," Drake said. "I know that bargaining with you is a profitless business. Whatever the deal, the answer is no."

"A pity," Tana said calmly. "I was prepared to help, not you but the girl, for your cooperation, but since you are obstinate—" She shrugged and moved toward the door.

"Wait a minute," Drake said quickly. "I'll do whatever I can if it will help Sharon."

Tana turned back, smiling mockingly.

"I shouldn't g i v e y o u another chance," she said, "but I am preparing to be merciful. For information concerning the whereabouts of Ali Baba I will see to it that the girl dies quickly."

"But I don't know where he is," Drake said desperately.

"You must do better than that," Tana said. "You and he attempted to escape together. You were caught; he

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got away. You must have an idea where he was going."

"I swear I don't," Drake said. "He grabbed me by the arm and led me to the door. I haven't the faintest idea what he had in mind."

Tana shrugged.

"Obviously then we can't bargain. I would have been willing to spare the girl the unpleasantness of being tortured to death, but since you can't help me I have no recourse but to order the royal torturers to proceed."

She was standing with her back to a large, massive pillar and as she turned to leave a brown arm appeared from behind the pillar, whipped swiftly about her throat and closed inexorably.

Tana's reaction was instinctive and ferocious. Every muscle in her lithe, steel-strong body contracted in a wild effort to break the strangling pressure of the arm against her throat.

Drake's heart pounded with a sudden hope as he watched the woman's frantic struggle.

Her face reddened and her eyes bulged horribly. Her mouth opened like a wide, red wound as she fought to draw breath into her laboring lungs.

But her struggles were futile. The arm tightened slowly and finally her body slumped with the suddennes of a taut wire snapping.

FROM behind the pillar stepped a lean, wiry man with brown face and snapping dark eyes. He released his arm from Tana's throat and stretched her on the floor.

He looked up then and smiled at Drake.

"I did not forget you my friend," he said.

"Ali Baba!" Drake cried incredulously. "I never thought I'd see you again."

Ali Baba looked reproachful.

"I do not forget my friends," he said. He glanced down at Tana's still form and his face darkened. "Or my enemies."

He crossed to Drake quickly and unscrewed the gyves that held his wrists. Drake then, with Ali Baba's help, released Sharon. She massaged her arms gratefully.

"What now?" Drake asked tensely. "We're free, but that's about all." He glanced at the still figure on the floor. "Is she—dead?"

Ali Baba shrugged. "Probably not. She is tough and hard." He chuckled grimly. "But when the Caliph's men find her here and it is learned that you have escaped," he grinned wickedly, "the Caliph will certainly make her wish that she had never been born."

"But how are we to get out?" Drake asked. "The doors are well guarded."

"Trust me," Ali Baba said. "I know another manner of leaving. We will be safe in my cave in another six hours, I can promise you that."

"No, we can't go with you," Drake said. "We've got to find Humai, the wizard, and get back to our own time. Can you help us do that?"

Ali Baba looked dubious.

"I can try," he said. "But let us hurry. His chambers are on the other side of the castle."

The approach to Humai's laboratory was well guarded, but Sharon walked confidently and boldly and the soldiers, who apparently did not know that she had fallen from the Caliph's favor, bowed deferentially to her with elaborate salaams.

The wizard was peering into a great emerald ball when they entered his smoky chambers. He was wearing a long white gown, marked with the signs of the zodiac. Steaming beakers filled the high-domed room with aromatic gases and in the midst of these

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swirling vapors Humai appeared as a fat, smiling gnome.

He regarded them with a cheerful, benign smile.

"What an honor," he said, rubbing his pink hands together. He bowed to Sharon. "I trust you are well and happy?"

Drake realized that Humai probably didn't know of recent developments between Sharon and the Caliph. He still thought of her as the Caliph's favorite. That one fact might save them all.

"We're quite well," Drake answered. "We are here at the orders of the Caliph. He wishes that Sharon be sent back to her own time."

HUMAI peered at them, blinking good-naturedly.

"Is our Caliph so tired already of his little story teller?" he inquired mildly.

"His reasons are his own," Drake said, "and none of our business. But speed is important."

"Of course," Humai murmured. "But we must wait until I talk to the Caliph. There are several things I must ascertain before I can send his story teller back to her own time." He smiled gently. "How do I know the Caliph wishes her to leave?"

"You have our word on that," Drake said.

"That, I am sorry, is not sufficient," Humai said.

"Why do we waste words with the fat fool?" Ali Baba said disgustedly. "Treat rogues like rogues and saints like saints has always been my credo."

He grabbed Humai by the front of his cloak and jerked him forward. A knife appeared magically in his other hand and its gleaming point grazed the wizard's pink neck.

"Do you need more persuasion?" he growled.

Humai's fat face was the color of chalk. His loose lips sagged foolishly and his eyes were wide with terror.

"Please," he gasped weakly, "take the knife away. I will do as you wish."

"That's better," Ali Baba said.

"I can't send all of you," Humai said, breathing a little more easily. "I can send you at the same time, but you will arrive a year apart in the future. My device is graded only at yearly intervals."

"That'll have to do," Drake said. He turned to Sharon. "You first, honey. And get to the State Department as fast as you can when you get to Washington. Remember, don't waste a second!" He kissed her suddenly. Wait for me, darling. It will only be a year."

"I'll wait," Sharon said. She smiled mistily. "If you don't show up I'm coming back to get you. And remember, I'm a gal who keeps her word. I never told a story in my life."

"That's right," Drake said. "But —" He stopped abruptly and stared at her, a smile breaking on his face. A dozen facts fitted suddenly together in his mind forming a complete and definite pattern. He started to laugh. "The hell you didn't!" he said. You're the greatest story-teller of all time. Why, hell, honey, you're Scheherazade!"

Sharon stared at him in bewilderment.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Nothing could be more obvious," Drake grinned. "You certainly remember the story of Scheherazade, the heroine of the Arabian Nights? The beautiful damsel who bewitched the Caliph of Bagdad with her highly imaginative stories and saved her own life by so doing."

"But," Sharon protested, blushing, "I never told him anything like the stories in the Arabian Nights! Those

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stories are terrible. I mean," she added hastily, "I've been told they're terrible."

"Maybe you didn't tell them," Drake said, "but you certainly got credit for them. In old Arabic the name of the story teller was 'Sharzard.' That's close enough to 'Sharon Ward' to make the entire thing fit perfectly."

Ali Baba interrupted irritably.

"Come, we must hurry."

"That's right," Drake said. He grinned at Sharon. "So long, honey. Remember, you're going to wait for me."

HUMAI led the girl to a small bench on which a delicate, coiled apparatus was set He made minute adjustments on several dials and then clamped a filament wire to Sharon's left wrist.

"You will feel nothing," he said gently.

"Goodbye, darling," Sharon cried.

Drake kissed her quickly.

"A year isn't so long," he murmured. "And," he grinned, stepping back from her, "you'll have something better to do than tell stories when we get married."

"Well," Sharon said, dropping her eyes, "naturally."

Drake was watching her, memorizing each of her lovely features, the curved arch of her eyebrows, the way her hair fell in waves to her shoulders, when suddenly her body seemed to shimmer, her features blurred faintly as if he were looking at her through a screen—and then she was gone!

He stepped forward involuntarily, a shocked, lost feeling in his heart.

"You are next," Humai said.

Drake clasped Ali Baba's hand tightly.

"Why don't you come too? You'd be only a year beyond me. I'd wait and watch for you."

"No, my friend," Ali Baba smiled.

Humai fastened the filament to Drake's wrist.

"I'm sorry," Drake said.

"So am I," Ali Baba said, shaking his head. "We have been good comrades."

Drake was thinking how stupid he had been in not realizing before the relationship between Sharon Ward and the Scheherazade whom most scholars considered a mythical character. He realized that the story of Ali Baba and his forty thieves would be told and retold in Bagdad and gradually take its place in the legends of the Thousand and One Nights.

If he had known that before, he wouldn't have allowed Ali Baba and his men to blunder into the trap in the Caliph's palace; for the story of that betrayal he had read in college. But it did no good to think of such things now.

But he did think of one other thing.

"Ali Baba," he said suddenly. "You will not be with us very long."

"Yes, my comrade?"

"Speak quickly," Humai said.

"Ali Baba," Drake said, "will you promise to do me one more favor?"

"Name it, comrade, and by the sacred name of Allah, it shall be done."

"Those poor wretches on the wheel that operates your cavern gate deserve mercy. Will you release them when you return to your cave?"

Ali Baba frowned.

"But—"

"You promised," Drake cried.

Ali Baba shook his head disgustedly.

"All right, all right," he said moodily. "But it is a hard thing you ask, for I have been thinking these last few hours of the exact spoke to which I would chain Tana, the foul ingrate who

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betrayed us. But," he shrugged disgustedly, "as you say, I have given my promise. It shall be done."

"Thanks, Comrade," Drake said. "You'll feel better yourself about—" He felt a slight shiver shake his body. "Goodbye," he said anxiously. "I think—"

His consciousness faded in a roaring spiral of darkness that seemed to pluck him upward with incredible speed and power. . . .

WHEN Sharon regained consciousness she was in Washington, D. C., and to her intense relief, in the twentieth century. She went directly to her apartment, where she got rid of the clothes she had worn in the Caliph's harem; then bathed and dressed she took a cab for the State Department. . . .

The three men at the table listened to her story, carefully, with thoughtfully pursed lips, frowns on their faces.

When she had finished, the man in the center, a tall, gray-haired gentleman, with a shrewd lined face, glanced briefly at his two companions and then turned back to her, smiling.

"Miss Ward," he said, "we owe you a debt of thanks. From what you have told us we will be able to make the necessary preparations to check any attempt the Axis might make to invade South America.

"We should have seen the way the wind was blowing ourselves," he continued, with a wry smile; "but sometimes even the most obvious facts are overlooked."

"I feel relieved that it's out of my hands," Sharon said. "Drake—Mr. Masterson insisted that I come to you immediately."

"He was right," the gray haired man assured her. He paused and then frowned. "But where is Mr. Masterson now? He is one of our most able young men and there's a number of jobs we could use him on."

Sharon faltered.

"I really can't tell you," she said, because I don't know. But he won't be back to Washington for another year."

"I see, Miss Ward. I realize, of course, that he must have been out of the country to gather this information." He shook his head admiringly. "These young men have a spirit of adventure that I respect tremendously. Why this whole thing is just like something from the Arabian Nights."

Sharon smiled.

"Isn't it, though?" she said.

She left the offices of the State Department, feeling relieved and fairly happy. But she wondered what the devil she was going to do for a whole year. . . .

THE END

☆ RADIUM FOXES ☆

"SILVER fox on the hoof" means more to many people than just a sophisticated young lady seen walking down the street wearing a fur coat. Visitors at Wisconsin fur farms have always been interested in the live fur-bearing animals. Now, however, these fur farms have a new feature, expected to attract even more spectators.

A much rarer sight, in years to come, will be *radium foxes* (a mutation of the silver fox), recently developed by Frederick C. Beck, Fred Eberlein, and the Wanless brothers, breeders of Thiensville, Shawano, and Viroqua, respectively.

The radium fox is all white, except for a blue-black undercoat. Wisconsin breeders predict it will replace the platinum fox as the most valuable of fox furs. Eberlein sheepishly confesses he killed the first litter of radium fox "puppies" because their albino appearance was irregular and seemed of no value.

Recently displayed at a Madison fur show, the radium fox pelts were barred from regular classifications. But prompt high bids convinced the Wisconsin fur farmers that patient breeding would produce a new strain to attract curious travelers and wealthy buyers to the wire-fenced fox runs.

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Mocking laughter from invisible lips spurred me on

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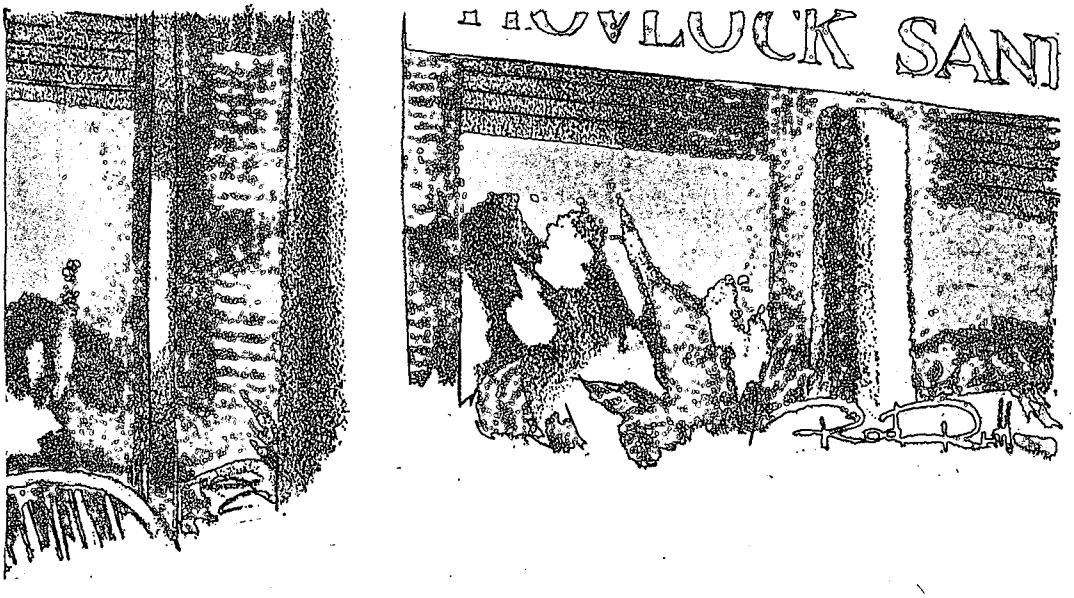

HAVE YOU SEEN ME?

By RICHARD VARDON

The psychiatrists had a field holiday with the young actor who had been advised to "be yourself."

AT BARS, parties, or social gatherings of any sort, when the subject of psychiatry is brought up I generally keep my yap shut. This in itself is unusual, inasmuch as I am scarcely the type to be described as the Silent Thinker. And it becomes more than unusual in view of the fact that psychiatry is one of the few subjects about which I have considerably better than a man-on-the-street knowledge.

You see, damned few of my friends are aware of it, but I was once a novitiate student in the then little practiced field of mental behavior. I had an ambition to be a great psychiatrist way back in the days when the field was looked on by all other sciences as a grazing ground for crackpots and charlatans and pensioned witch doctors.

Why, I remember that during my brief period as the eager young student of psychology, my family begged me to keep my ambitions and pursuits a

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secret, for fear of the embarrassment they'd suffer among their friends should it be learned that young Richard had gone so drastically off the deep end.

In those days—and they were a long time ago, don't forget—I had to tote my textbooks on psychiatry around as furtively as if they'd been copies of *Nasty Stories*. People just didn't understand.

Now, of course, it's different. Like I said, at bars and at parties, and at every kind of social gathering, psychiatry is as fashionable a topic of conversation as war, or crime, or even adultery. And, also like I said, while this conversational ball is being booted merrily back and forth, I have to find a quiet seat in a dark corner and keep my mouth shut.

Maybe you want to know why this is so. Maybe you want to know why I'm not in the thick of such discussions, waving my arms and spitting psychological terminology and identifying myself as one of the small, grim band of undaunted, far-sighted Thinkers who pioneered the subject of psychiatry to its present popularity. You want to know why?

It's because the entire subject of psychology is nauseating to me. It's because, personally and unshakably, I think psychiatry stinks.

NOW wait a minute. Don't get me wrong. I think there was something to the idea of a study of the human mind and human thought patterns when it first started. I think the first philosopher started chipping away at the right stone when he sat down one day and decided to figure himself and the rest of his chums out. I think, too, that the guy who first got the idea that philosophy itself wasn't enough to do the job of cracking the nut of human motivation had a pretty good idea.

The *idea* underlining psychology is solid. I have no quarrel with it. Humanity must, sooner or later, find out something more than a mere physical knowledge of what makes it tick. But it isn't going to find it out through psychology. Never in a million years. Because the psychologists themselves, the guys who rolled up their sleeves to do a strip tease with the human mind, have long since tied themselves up in a hundred thousand knots because of the limitations of their own mental behavior patterns. They have equipped themselves with hundreds of charts. On the charts they write thousands of words. The words are long and hard to pronounce, and the psychologists are pleased with them. For every screwy-looie they slap into a nut house, the psychologists have a word, sometimes lots of words.

Every time some poor devil pops up with some queer quirk of behavior that his fellow human beings find incomprehensible, he's hustled off to the nearest booby hatch where a bunch of psychiatrists find any one of a thousand words to explain his condition and shove him into a loony bin.

Say somebody suddenly starts talking to people who aren't there. He keeps it up until he finds himself whipped off to a neat white room where psychiatrists with pencils and charts and a lot of time to waste ask him endless foolish questions. By the time the poor devil leaves that neat white room his entire life has been methodically recorded, and the psychologists have found a name for him and an explanation for his behavior.

"He's a dementia such-and-such," the psychiatrists explain smugly, "and his habit of talking to people who don't exist can be traced to the fact that he swallowed a basketball when he was four years old."

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It would never occur to the psychiatrists, of course, to consider for an instant that the loony they'd just hustled away might actually have been talking to people visible only to him. That explanation would be far too simple to suit their highly complicated minds. In a universe where the surface of knowledge has scarcely been scratched, they smugly and confidently write off such an explanation as an absurd impossibility.

And therein lies the trouble with psychology, *plus* the reason for my having deserted my youthful ambitions to make a name for myself as a nutcracker. It took just one instance in the beginning of those youthful aspirations to bring them to an end; just one instance to bring me to the opinion I now hold on the matter.

Here's how it happened . . .

OLD Doctor Farbsund, under whom I was studying, had decided that it was about time I began a little psychiatric analysis on my own hook. He equipped me with a short, explanatory note to a friend of his who was in charge of a mental sanitarium several miles out in the country.

The sanitarium was one of those big, sprawling ex-mansions which had been converted into a loony roost for the nutty limbs of wealthy family trees. It was the sort of place where Mr. Gotrocks could board crazy Sister Sue when she started rattling too loudly in the family closet.

The doctor in charge of the sanitarium, a short, bearded, solemn little man named Hovlock, received me gravely in his office, accepted the letter I'd brought from old Doctor Farbsund, read it several times to make certain it wasn't a clever ruse designed to commit me into his hands, and cleared his throat.

I remember that I sat there nervously on the edge of my chair while bearded little Doctor Hovlock peered appraisingly at me over the top of his be-ribboned specs.

"So you are a pupil of Doctor Farbsund?" he said, after a minute of silence.

I didn't realize it then, but there was evidence—as long ago as it was—of the psychiatrist mistrusting the obvious.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"And you wish the opportunity to make your own analysis of one of my patients?"

I nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Ahhh," said little Doctor Hovlock, tugging at his small beard.

"It will be my first attempt at such an analysis alone," I said shakily.

"Of course," said Doctor Hovlock. "Of course."

"Doctor Farbsund said that you are to give me no data whatsoever on the patient you permit me to interview," I said. "He wants to see how closely—in a rough way, of course—I can come to your own conclusions on the case."

"I understand that," said Doctor Hovlock. "I was just deciding which patient would be best suited for the purpose."

I waited breathlessly, while the little psychiatrist closed his eyes and thought. At last he opened them again.

"I think the patient in Room Ten might be interesting to you," he said. "His case is peculiar, and yet comparatively simple. He is a former actor—the son of a wealthy banking family, oddly enough—who gained some small prestige on the stage during the eight or ten years of his career. He was brought here by his family shortly after he started running advertisements in the newspapers."

"Advertisements?" I blinked. "What sort of advertisements?"

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"Just a moment," said Doctor Hovlock, "and I shall show you one of them."

He rose from his desk and walked over to a small file case. For a minute or more he thumbed through its contents until he found what he wanted.

"Ah!" He turned away from the case, a small scrap of paper torn from a newspaper in his hand. He resumed his seat behind his desk, handing me the scrap of newsprint as he did so. "Advertisements of this nature," he explained.

I LOOKED down at a section obviously taken from the personal column of a daily newspaper. Circled with a red pencil was one advertisement.

"Have You Seen Me? I cannot find myself. Is there a me? Do you know? Please communicate with Guy Dawlis, Embassy Theater, at once, if you have seen me. This is urgent!

Guy Dawlis."

I had to read it over a second time. I couldn't believe it. It was one of the craziest items I'd ever seen in a personal column in my life.

"Was this some publicity stunt?" I asked, adding, "I mean, something to do with his being an actor?"

Doctor Hovlock shook his head.

"Not at all. The advertisements, it soon developed, were not any publicity stunt. They were the actual manifestations of the young man's mental condition. This was proved when he started asking his friends and family the same questions."

"You mean he actually thought he had lost himself?" I demanded.

Doctor Hovlock nodded. "Exactly."

"But what did he mean? What brought on that condition? How was—"

The bearded little psychiatrist raised his hand, cutting me off in mid-stride.

"Those are questions which I will leave you to determine in your interview with young Dawlis," he said. "His case, I repeat, although unusual, is really rather simple. See how close you come in your analysis of it."

"Yes, sir," I said in a voice that trembled with eagerness.

Little Doctor Hovlock rose.

"Come along," he said.

We went out into a corridor where the bearded little doctor signalled a white coated male attendant who had been sitting at the far end reading a magazine.

"Take this gentleman to see Mr. Dawlis in Room Ten, Robert," said Doctor Hovlock. "He is to be permitted an uninterrupted interview of half an hour. When he has finished, escort him back here."

Robert, the male attendant, was a big, red-necked, muscular giant whose prime utility around the institution was obvious at a glance.

"Another psychiatry student?" he asked, a trifle derisively, when Doctor Hovlock had gone back into his office.

I admitted that I was, and self-consciously shifted my blank form papers into my other hand.

"Come on, then," said Robert, belching ungently. "I'll introduce you to Shakespeare."

"Shakespeare?" I asked. "Does he think he's Shakespeare?"

Robert shook his head. "Naw. But he's the damnedest ham I ever seen in all my life."

Robert marched on ahead of me, and I hurried after him down the hall. At the end of the corridor we came to some stairs up which Robert guided me to the second floor. Then he led me down

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a heavily carpeted hallway until we came to a room door marked, 10. Robert knocked with surprising gentleness on this door.

It opened an instant later, although there had been no sound from inside the room.

A TALL, rather handsome young man in his early thirties stood in the doorway. He was wearing an expensively tailored silk lounging robe and his black, uncut, wavy hair was uncombed.

He stared at us in surprise for an instant, then a flicker of swift hope flashed through his blue eyes.

"Hove I been found?" he demanded.

I started to answer, but Robert beat me to the punch.

"Naw," he said. "But this here gentleman has come here to talk to you about your trouble."

The hope died in the young man's eyes as quickly as it had been born. He ran one hand dramatically through his wild black hair.

"When sorrows come," he said, "they come not single spies!" He stepped back from the door, and with a sweep of his hand, added: "I bid thee, stranger, enter!"

I looked uncertainly at Robert. The massive attendant was turning away to get back to his magazine, and I knew that asking him to hang around would be useless. I stepped into the room.

The young man closed the door behind us as I was looking around the place. It was a sitting room, I saw, comfortably furnished. Through a door at one end I caught a glimpse of a more than ample bedroom, mentally checking the fact that his parents evidently had plenty of money to hide their family skeleton in such style.

"Be seated; pray be seated," said the young man.

I SAW a comfortable armchair near a window and went quickly over to it, glad to relieve my watery knees. My first solo venture into psychiatric analysis had me more jittery than I'd imagined it would.

"My name—" I began, sitting down.

Young Dawlis cut me off with a vague wave of his hand.

"Of what matter is it to me?" he asked. "I know you are one of them."

"One of them?" I repeated uncertainly.

"One of the curious," he said. "On those papers in your hand you will jot down curious facts concerning the curious pattern that has been my life until now. From those facts you will try to determine what ails me."

"I, uh, want only to try to help you," I said.

"Only by finding me can you help me," my subject declared bitterly. Suddenly he sighed. "But what matter that you cannot? It will do no harm to tell my tale to you."

"If you would let me ask you—" I began.

Young Dawlis cut me off with another gesture of his hand.

"You need ask me nothing. I will tell you the story of my life. I will tell it to you from the beginning, and you can make your jottings as I go along."

I knew that I'd gotten off to a poor start, but I figured that I might as well let him run with the ball a bit until I could hit on a way of getting it back in my own hands.

"Please do," I said.

"I was born an actor," he began.

"But your parents—" I broke in, in spite of myself.

The young man glared at me. "My father is a banker, my parents had no theatrical background in either of their families. I am very well aware of that. But I repeat, I was born an actor. I

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must have been. Undoubtedly, with my first cries I sought attention and hurled myself into the role of sweet and helpless infanthood."

The train had suddenly jumped the tracks for me. I showed my bewilderment in my expression.

"If you will hear me further, you will understand," said young Dawlis. "In saying that I acted as a baby, I mean merely that I acted as much as could be possible for an unthinking infant."

I decided to humor him. "I see," I said. "I understand perfectly."

A strange gleam came into his eyes. "The hell you do," he snapped. "But that doesn't make any difference. You will soon enough. We will skip my early infancy, since it is beyond your comprehension. We'll pick up my life at the age of five years, if that will be more simple for you."

I didn't say anything to that. There wasn't much I could say.

"You are undoubtedly aware that children at the age of five play with toys, make up games, live in worlds of fancy?" young Dawlis asked sarcastically.

"At even earlier ages—" I began defensively, forgetting my role momentarily.

Dawlis cut me off with a wave of his hand. "We are starting my history at that age," he said. "Let us not go back any farther. The point is this: As a child of five, playing the games of a child of five, the first full forces of my imagination began to be evident."

"I, ah, don't quite understand," I said.

"In my games," said the actor, "I went much farther in my flights of fancy than other children. I played a war game, for example, with a little boy next door. I *became a soldier*. Only the intervention of my governess saved me from killing that boy with one of my father's guns."

HE STOOD there, eyes flashing, arms crossed, staring at me to see that that point sank in. On my blank form I jotted: *"At age of five homicidal urge evident. Reason?"*

"At the age of six," Dawlis continued, after giving me time to make my note, "I became interested in Indians. At every opportunity I took to the woods until my family was sick with worry from running after me. One night I scalped my father."

"Scalped your father?" I exclaimed.

Dawlis smiled reflectively. "I *was* an Indian, don't you see? Of course I did a clumsy job. I only gave the old boy a few minor gashes in his skull."

I made another note. *"Homicidal tendency still pronounced at six. Reason?"*

Dawlis had watched me scribble the notation. He smiled, in a sort of grimly satisfied way. Then he resumed his narration.

"It was pretty much the same during the next two or three years that followed. I wanted to be a cowboy. I *was* a cowboy for almost a year. I tried to brand a policeman's horse, and the animal gave me a kick that put me in the hospital for three weeks."

I leaned forward excitedly. Maybe there was something here.

"A concussion perhaps?" I asked.

"I wasn't kicked where you can get a concussion," Dawlis answered. "But the kick is of no importance. I am merely trying to highlight for you some of the incidents indicating the strength of my growing ability to project myself headlong into whatever characterization interested my childish fancy. And I am merely trying to point out to you that there was no time during my childhood when I wasn't acting a part."

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"But surely there were times when these childish dream-wishes of yours were absent," I said. "Undoubtedly, like many normal children, you lived adventurous little roles in your mind. But normally, you were a growing boy and nothing more, weren't you?"

"That," said Dawlis, "is the point I am stressing. I was never a normal child. Even when being punished by my parents I was playing a role. When sent to be without supper I was Oliver Twist and my father was Fagin. When I got my hand caught in the kitchen drain pipe I was the boy with his thumb in the dyke, saving all Holland."

I made another notation. *"Perhaps unusually pronounced dream-flights. Delusions of grandeur unusually pronounced. Reason?"*

"It was about that time that I began noticing people," Dawlis went on. "Noticing their habits and mannerisms and smallest gestures. I began to mimic what I observed, and to put my new skill to use in playing the roles I chose. I was reading a lot, too. Everything I could get my hands on. The books I read gave me hundreds of new roles to play. The infinite variety gave me a chance never to be without some characterization other than my own. I was never myself, do you understand? I was always in a role."

I made a note about environmental effects and couldn't think of anything sensible to draw from it.

"At twelve and thirteen," Dawlis went on, "I became young Jack Strongheart, a clean-living young chap who won his letter in sports at Rutgers. I carried this role to such perfection that my grammar school team awarded me the sportsmanship prizes in every contest."

"Marked change in behavior pattern and attitude. Social consciousness appears. Reason?" That was my notation when he paused again.

"The role grew tiresome, of course," Dawlis went on. "And the Arsene Lupin influence resulted in my next role of gentleman thief. I pilfered here and there through my first several years of high school, never getting caught, until my father at last surprised me in an attempt to crack his wall safe. I was Jimmy Valentine for months after that, going straight. It was in my third year of high school that I found my interest in school plays. I joined the dramatic club, and from that association, assumed the role of the Great Actor. This determined my choice of a career. By becoming an actor, you see, I could insure myself against ever having to be anything like myself. My business would be such that it could not interfere with my borrowed characterizations, and off the stage I would be able to live in varying roles as they happened to fit my private life. It was perfect."

HE PAUSED long enough to give me time to make another notation. But for the life of me, I couldn't think of anything to jot down. I was getting far too confused.

"I was in college only long enough to act in several freshman dramatic productions," Dawlis went on. "My role then was of impatient genius chafing 'neath the chains of convention and family wishes. You see, my father still expected me to be a banker, like himself. In the middle of my first year at college I left school and set out on my own to become a great actor on the legitimate stage. The struggle that lay ahead did not deter me, for it presented the fascinating role of impoverished young man of ambition sleeping on park benches and fighting fate—a part straight from fiction. I played it to the hilt during the years that followed."

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Dawlis ran a hand dramatically over his eyes.

"Ah, struggle," he murmured softly. Then he went on. "Eventually, I began to rise in my chosen profession. Small parts at first, then more sizable ones. Off the stage I continued to change my characterizations like neckties. There was a girl to whom I became engaged while enthralled with the role of earnest young lover. The engagement was broken purposely by me when I desired to don the characterization of a young man embittered by a shattered heart and thus left with only ambition. This self-chosen part, I feel sure, did much to aid in my rise toward minor prominence in the theater."

"But surely—" I began.

"Wait—don't interrupt," Dawlis said. "After several more years I married. Don't you see why? I was the young husband with a wife awaiting him in a vine-covered cottage. Even the tender affection I bestowed upon my bride was a characterization, not my own. And then, quite suddenly, my bride grew ill. During the months that followed I was a grief-crazed Poe, do you understand? It was a magnificently emotional part, and I let no gesture of it escape me. When my wife died I walked from the church with shoulders bowed and a world shattered. The pathos of the characterization had been donned like an overcoat, even though I played it splendidly."

Dawlis paused again, running his hand through his wild black hair.

"And a wind came out of the sea," he whispered. He held the pose a minute, then resumed his narration.

"After that I was Sidney Carton, straight from the *Tale of Two Cities*. I was the brilliant drunkard, an excellent part, drowning the grief and the frustration of love inside me with liquor, going to seed and damnation with a bitterly sardonic smile." He paused to smile reminiscently. "I had always wanted to play Sidney Carton, and that was an excellent chance. I could not resist it."

The smile left his face and his eyes grew shining and noble.

"It is a far better thing I do than I have ever done before," he murmured. Then he sighed, spreading his hands expressively. "There was exquisite poignancy in the role, but it couldn't last forever. I snapped out of it, and became a fallen man rising once more from the degradation brought on him by tragedy. That was a good part, too."

I WASN'T making any more notations. I was just sitting there gaping wordlessly at him.

"My rise back to prominence started a little over a year ago," young Dawlis said. "I returned to the stage, and in a short time was given a decent part in a prominent play. On opening night this play went over tremendously. After the last curtain the producer rushed up to me, pounded me on the back and shook my hand and spoke the fatal words."

Now I was really puzzled. "The fatal words?" I echoed.

Dawlis nodded slowly. "Yes. The producer said: 'Dawlis, you've proved yourself. Your comeback is assured. *From now on you'll be yourself again!*'"

The young actor paused there dramatically, to let the words sink in. But I didn't get them. They didn't sink. Dawlis saw this on my face.

"Don't you see?" he demanded. "The producer told me to be *myself!* He told me that, and the word, *'yourself'* stunned me with its implication. I suddenly realized that I had never been myself. I don't know how or why it

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was that that was the first time I realized that fact. The important thing is that I became suddenly, terrifyingly aware that I had never been myself."

I was holding tight to the sled as he rounded those turns. It was all I could do to keep my grip as he continued.

"I went back to my dressing room in a daze," Dawlis said. "The daze was undoubtedly an act, a characterization, taken from some long forgotten part. Through my mind again and again ran the realization that I wasn't real, *that I had never been real,* that I had always been the personification of something which was a million miles from being *actually me.*"

I could sense a sharp curve coming up, so I grabbed the sides of the conversational sled even tighter than before.

"And if I hadn't been real, had never been myself," Davis went on excitedly, voice rising, "how did I know if there actually was a me?" He paused. "How did I know that there had ever been a me?" His voice fell to a stage whisper. "I sat down in my dressing room and tried to be myself. Nothing happened. I had no success. I knew that, even as I tried desperately to be myself, I was nothing but a conglomeration of a thousand parts, a thousand emotions, gestures, postures and poses. I couldn't find myself in that maze of characterizations. Somewhere back in the maelstrom of a thousand roles there might be me, *the real me.* But how was I to know? How was I ever to find myself? It was terrifying, sitting there and realizing that I was not real, that I was nothing but the product of a suddenly terrifying dream world."

"What did you do?" a voice croaked hoarsely. It was my own.

"At first I grew frantic," Dawlis declared. "And the knowledge that my frantic behavior was in itself a role made me even worse. At last I calmed down enough to rationalize. It was then that I hit on the plan of a slow, careful search. The idea of advertising seemed my only chance to ascertain if there was anyone who could realize my plight and aid me in finding myself. It proved not only futile, but the action which resulted in my ending up here, in this sanitarium, pleading my case to you and others like you." Dawlis sighed, dropping his outspread hands to his side. His shoulders slumped wearily. "I have lost myself," he said quietly. "I am not real. I have never been real."

THERE was a silence of fully a minute. Finally I cleared my throat. Swiftly, I was searching for something to say. In the spell of the young thespian's eloquence and dramatic delivery I had temporarily quite forgotten I was listening to a loony. Now, of course, that fact returned crystal clear. And half an instant later, another idea crystallized an exciting idea.

"Mr. Dawlis!" I exclaimed. "Do you realize what has been happening while you've been talking?"

The young actor stared moodily at me.

"No," he said. "But it can be of no consequence."

"Of no consequence?" I yelped. "Why, man, it's of tremendous consequence. While you were talking, while you were telling me the story of your life, you were being yourself! You were looking objectively at yourself, *as* yourself! Mr. Dawlis—look no further, you have at last found the real you!"

There was no change of expression on Dawlis' face nor in his moody eyes. Slowly, he shook his head.

"How little you know," he said. Now his expression changed, and a zany smirk touched the corners of his

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handsome mouth.

"I was not standing off, being myself, as you say," he declared. "I was playing, in case you were not aware of it, young Hamlet in the throes of madness. It is a role to which I have become particularly attached since my confinement here. You and the others who come snooping around with your paper and pencils and questions give me an opportunity to polish it."

From my momentary crest of elation I dropped to low level flying. Desperately, I tried one last stab.

"Mr. Dawlis," I begged him, "isn't there anything you can do to rid yourself of those poses? If you could eliminate them completely, you'd be bound to be left as your true self."

"You think so?" Dawlis inquired sardonically.

"It's logical, at any rate," I urged him. "Can't you try?"

Dawlis smiled a peculiarly sardonic smile. Maybe he was playing Sidney Carton.

"I've tried that," he said. "Don't think I haven't."

"And nothing happened?" I asked.

"When I dropped my conglomeration of roles completely—forced them out of my mind utterly?" he asked.

"Yes, of course. That's what I mean," I said patiently. "You say you've tried it. Well—if you did, what happened?"

"Just a minute," said Dawlis. He held up his hand, closing his eyes and knitting his brows in concentration. "I'm getting rid of all the poses," he whispered half a minute later. "I can do it, but it isn't easy. I have to try very hard. Very hard!"

"Try harder," I suggested.

DAWLIS had a beatific, out-of-this-world expression on his face now. He held up one hand dramatically for attention, as if he wasn't getting enough of it already.

"Now!" he hissed dramatically, "The hodge-podge of make believe that is my *unreal* self is leaving. One by one, I am driving my roles and my poses from my being."

If that was what he was doing, there was no physical manifestation of it. No shadowy, wavering, cloaked figures trooping out of his body or anything like that, I mean.

"An instant!" hissed Dawlis. "An instant and the last of them will be gone."

I shifted my weight from the right foot to the left, trying to be patient. And in that instant it happened.

He wasn't.

Wasn't. Yes, that's the word. Just wasn't. There wasn't a sign of Guy Dawlis anywhere in the room! My eyes had left him for the briefest flicker of a second, and when they returned to where he should have been standing—he was gone!

Of course I turned quickly around, expecting to see him whizzing out the door on me. But the door was closed, and hadn't been opened by anyone. There hadn't been time for that. No one could have been quick enough to dash around me in the flicker of an eye and get out the door without creating considerable attention. No one.

Slowly, very slowly, I looked around the room.

There was, of course, absolutely no sign of Guy Dawlis. I took a deep breath. A very deep breath. I also took a firm grasp on my sanity, or what I had considered to be my sanity.

"Dawlis!" I croaked. "Dawlis!"

There wasn't a sound. Not a single sound. I closed my eyes and tried again.

"Dawlis," I said, "you can come out, now. You've had your fun. You

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can come out from wherever you're hiding."

I was answered by a loud, laughing peal of silence.

Slowly, I toured the room, looking everywhere but under the carpets. Finally I was back where I started from. Uneasily, I began to be aware of an exceedingly peculiar sensation. The sensation of being *watched*. Yes, watched by *unseen eyes,* if you want to use the old cliche.

I couldn't get rid of that feeling, and with every second it was growing stronger. Pretty soon I didn't feel I was being watched. I *knew* it.

Guy Dawlis was still in that room. And he was watching me. There was no question of it. Very nonchalantly—oh-so-casually—I gathered up my things and started for the door. I wasn't at all sure that my knees would hold me up long enough to reach it.

But they did. And they performed admirably as I started my mad dash out of there. Out of the house, I mean. No, I didn't stop downstairs to chat with the head of the booby hatch. I didn't take time to saunter up to his desk and remark in an offhand way:

"Thanks for the use of your star loony. You can have him back now, if you can find him."

No, I didn't do any of that. I was exceptionally rude, I guess, in my haste to get the hell away. I'm sure, of course, that my rudeness and strange behavior was reported to my instructor, and that that old quack told the other old quack that he couldn't imagine what had gotten into me. I'm sure of that, even though I never saw my dear, learned, cocksure psychological mentor again—ever.

THE papers, several days later, reported that a young man named Guy Dawlis had disappeared from a rest sanitarium, and that he was formerly an actor and that his people were worried about what had happened to him.

I watched the papers carefully for a long time after that. Watched the papers while beginning my instructions in a good, solid, substantial school of mechanical engineering. There was never anything more about young Dawlis.

So there you have it. The story, and the explanation for the story, without any attempts to tell or explain anything except exactly what happened.

Maybe my old professor could have explained it. He and his comrade in charlatanism, the head of the nut home, probably worked out a beautiful explanation for it all between them. And they probably tacked a big word on it that meant escapism or something similar, and thought that that took care of the explanation for Dawlis' running away from the rest home.

Of course they'd be sure he ran away. What else could he have done? I could have told them what else he could have done. I could have told them what he *had done.*

But I didn't want them thinking up a name to explain me. I'm very satisfied with the name I have.

It's Napoleon. . . .

THE END

NEXT MONTH—William P. McGivern Challenged!

You read "The Enchanted Bookshelf" in our March, 1943, issue. It was based on the three musketeers. Now read another musketeer story . . .

"CAVERNS OF TIME," By Carlos McCune

An Author's Duel!—Weapons: "The Three Musketeers"!

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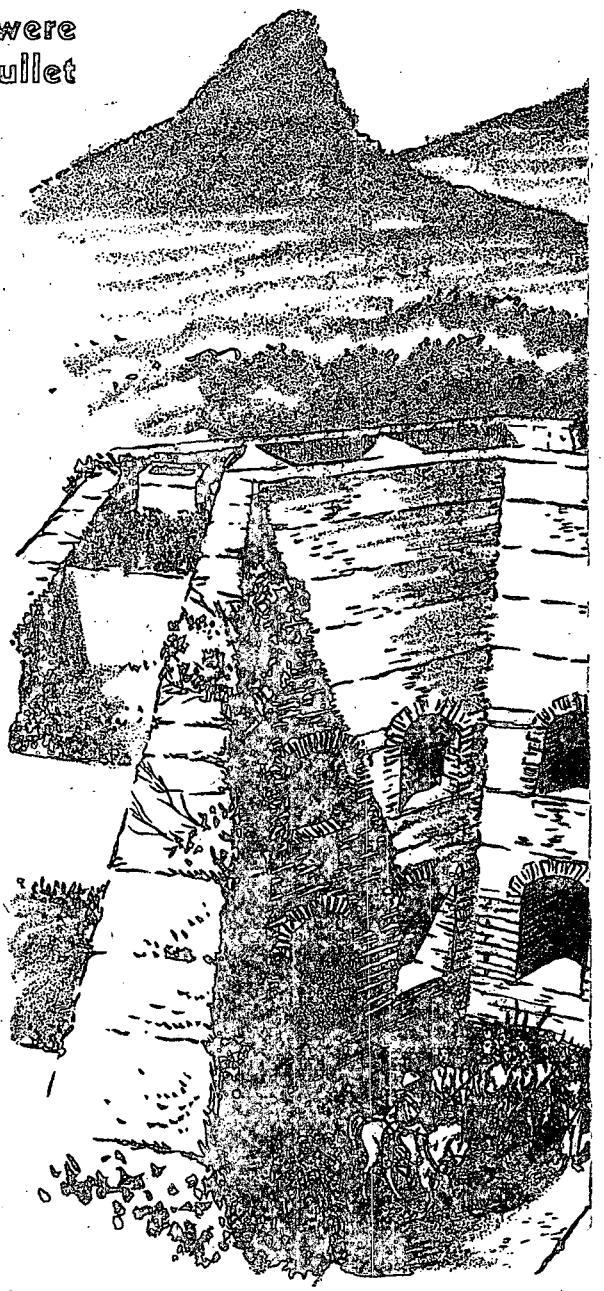
CITADEL OF

King Christophe came back from the dead to regain his kingdom. Between him and victory were four people and a golden bullet



I'LL never forget that first morning the S. S. *Berwain* rocked gently at anchor on the bay of Cape Haitian. Perhaps, if it hadn't been for George Weston's urgent note, I would have spent another week on board with Captain Wingate, touching the islands of the Carribean. I knew Professor Weston needed me—and badly. His letter, addressed to me in New York, was creased and dirty in my coat pocket:

Christopher Wells,
Annipol Hotel,
New York City.
Chris:

For once in my life, I'm going to depend on our friendship and that alone, to bring you to Haiti as speedily as you can make the trip I cannot, for reasons that will later be evident, give you any reason for coming. Suffice to say, that you know I never fly off half-cocked.

I came here for research. I have found a country tottering on the edge of disaster. I, also, am involved. I'm depending on you, Chris. Meet me on August 27 at Cape Haitien.

Your old friend,
George Weston,

I read that note over a dozen times

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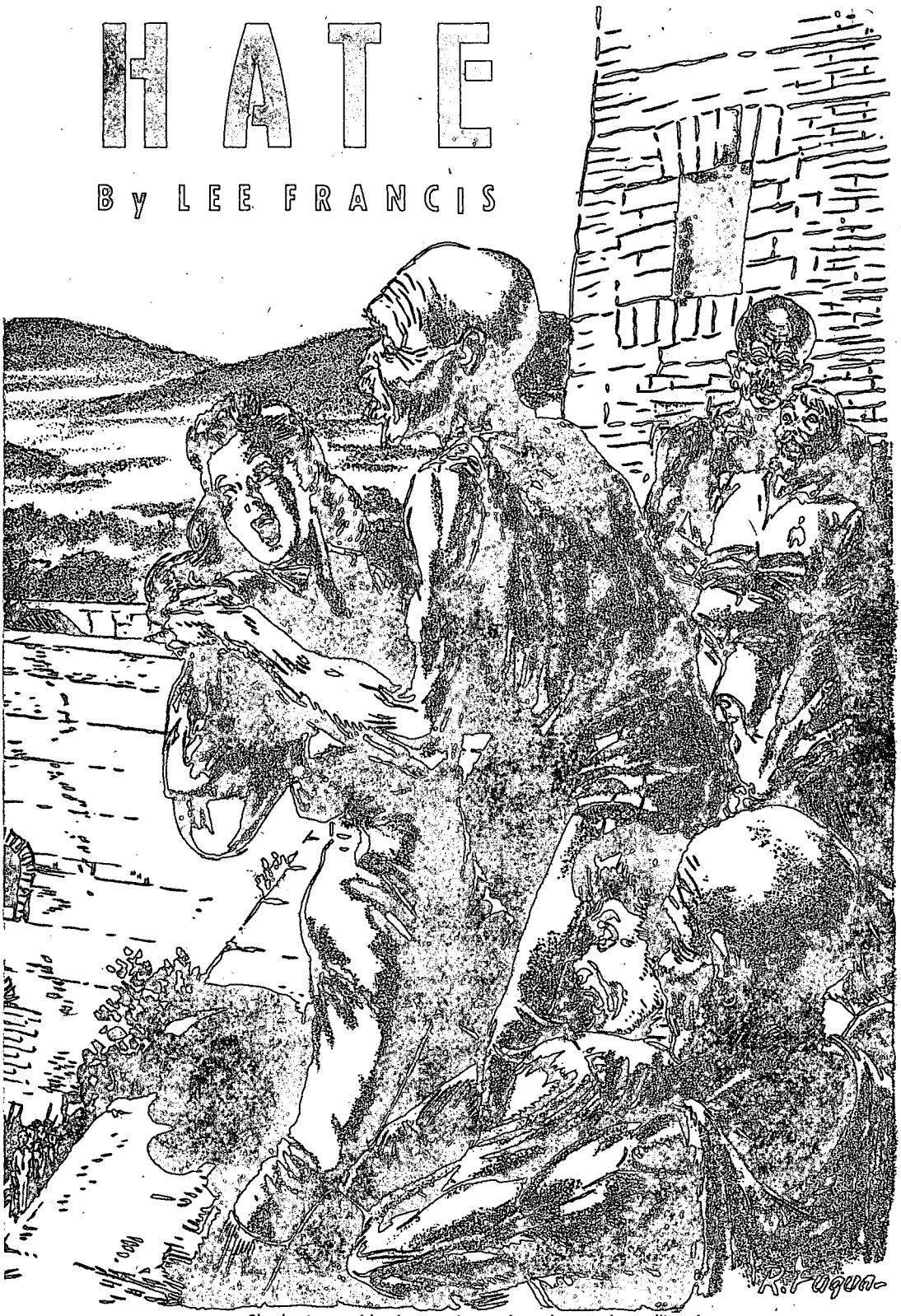
HATE

By LEE FRANCIS



Slowly, inexorably she was being forced over the wall's edge

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during the trip down. Haiti is not strange to me. In fact, very little of the world is. Weston knew my love for trouble, be it of the small or desperate variety. I believe his knowledge of the scraps I've been in, prompted his note. I couldn't let him down.

That morning, sitting there off shore, I wondered about the strange 'disaster' he mentioned. Before us lay the curl of beach, banks of sugar-cane stretched inland and beyond the green forest. There was no sun in the scarred, bottomless ravines that ran back into the mountains. Over Haiti, that same smouldering look af the past was evident. A country nursed with blood and hate.

I heard the gruff voice of Captain Wingate as he emerged from his cabin. A boat scraped against the side of the S. S. *Berwain,* and we were headed for the coral beach. Half a dozen native blacks pulled at the oars.

The jetty was covered with grimacing black men and women. Stacks of mangoes, bananas and alligator pears were everywhere. I stepped out of the boat to look for the gray-haired Professor Weston somewhere in the throng of wooly heads. He was nowhere in sight.

A HUGE black man came out of the melee. His body was enormous and shining. He came straight toward me, a big grin on his face and bowed shortly with his shoulders.

"White fella' look for Mr. Weston?"

His face was black as ebony. A red scar cut across his chin and gave his mouth a natural sneer. His arms were big and muscles rippled under dark skin.

"Weston?" I repeated slowly. "I'm looking for no one."

A moment later, I was glad that I had lied to him. An expression of bewilderment crossed his face. His head darted around and he seemed to be looking for support from someone in the shadows beyond the jetty. I studied the buildings that rotted along the shore. No one seemed to notice him. He turned toward me again.

"Mr. Weston say you are young man with red hair, much big muscle and blue eyes," he repeated the words mechanically. "I am sure you are Mr. Wells."

"Suppose I am?" I liked the man less and less.

"Mr. Weston say you come with me," he invited. "He wait for you in his carriage."

That wasn't like George Weston, I knew.

The black turned on his heel and threaded his way swiftly down the jetty. Trying to dodge among the piles of fruit and cages of parrots that seemed to dominate the place, I followed. The snug feeling of the small automatic I carried under my coat made my frame of mind a little less uncertain.

We reached the end of the dock, and hurrying to keep pace with any man, I found myself in one of the huge, rotting warehouses that line the bay. It was dark and cool inside and evidently a shortcut to the street beyond. The black was nervous. I flatter myself that I was a tougher looking customer than he had anticipated.

There were three piles of sugar-cane close to the entrance. We passed the first and I realized suddenly that he was no longer with me. I stopped in my tracks. A short dash would have placed me in the safety of the street.

Shuffling footsteps sounded behind me. Whipping about, I drew the automatic from my belt. A black man was close to me, his face an expressionless mask. His hand was gripped about the handle of a broad cane knife.

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I dodged swiftly to one side and fired as I dropped. The heavy blade of the knife swooped down in a wide arc and missed my head by inches. I tried to roll over quickly and saw him double up with pain. I had placed the shot in his chest.

As I came to my feet, the black with the scar chin was close to me. His fists were balled into huge lumps. He lashed out as I tried to regain my balance.

"Wham!"

A sickening pain surged through my head and I staggered backward against the pointed sticks of cane. Lying there half conscious, I heard far-off voices and cursed myself for having so neatly walked into a trap. It was useless to attempt to move. My body seemed paralyzed by the blow. I closed my eyes and darkness swirled over me.

CHAPTER II

Enter Captain Wingate

I LEARNED afterward, that the black man with the red scar was to be my bitterest enemy as long as I stayed in Haiti. I learned that past his grinning inspection went every black slave who was later to serve in the hell-gangs of Henri Christophe.

But all this took place weeks later. At the time I was trussed carefully and tossed into a wooden-wheeled wagon. Straw and cane were thrown over me.

From George Weston, I learned that he *had* been waiting in the street that day I arrived.

Weston had arrived in Cape Haitian six months before, with his daughter Helen. I remembered George as a slightly built professor of history at the eastern college I had attended. Weston was a man of fifty, with keen gray eyes behind thick-rimmed glasses. He never tired of these summer trips that resulted in new material to be analyzed during the winter months. Helen, twenty, and the owner of the sweetest smile I have ever looked upon, always went with him.

They sat in their carriage close to the jetty, waiting for me to arrive. Weston wasn't afraid for me. He had no way of knowing that his mail was tampered with; that plans were made well in advance for my quick disposal. The boats from the ship landed and went away again. Weston leaned forward in his seat, waited eagerly for some sign of the red hair I'm attached to. I must have lost myself quickly in the crowd, because he never saw me. At last he turned to Helen:

"I'm *sure* he was on that ship," he said. "He wired that he'd look for us here."

Helen Weston frowned.

"Dad! Those devils couldn't have found him first?"

Weston looked uneasy.

"I think not," he said. "No one but ourselves knew he would be here."

A small ox-drawn cart emerged from the building before them. It was piled with sugar-cane. A great black man with a red scar on his chin was driving the beasts. If Weston had known that I lay under that cane, I'm sure the events that followed would have been greatly altered. He remembers having noticed the satanic grin on the driver's face as the cart rolled slowly past.

"That man frightens me." Helen shivered.

"He *was* a tough-looking customer," Weston admitted. "The blacks are thoroughly stirred up, Helen. If Chris doesn't get here, I'm going to have to ask for help higher up."

The girl turned and watched the ox cart move out of sight in the dust of

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the road. She placed a small hand on her father's knee.

"This thing is too much for us," she said slowly. "Even for Mr. Wells. No one man can face the wrath of a ghost king. Dad, I think you'd better call for troops."

Weston's face hardened.

"And be laughed out of any office I visit as a fool-headed, imaginative history bug," he answered bitterly. "No, Helen, it's still our fight. I'm going to get a look at that ship's passenger list. Something is wrong and I'm going to find out what it is."

CAPTAIN Wingate was just coming ashore, when George Weston and his daughter reached the dock. Weston told Wingate enough of what was going on to interest him. Captain Wingate was a man who loved adventure. During the trip down from New York, he had expressed himself on this subject to me, in the typical Wingate manner.

"Wells," he roared one night, as we sat over a late brandy, "I'm gonna give up this tub one of these days and get into trouble up to my neck."

I laughed at him, trying to picture the rotund little man with the fierce black mustache doing anything but bullying his crew about the deck.

"What kind of trouble would you prefer, Captain?" I asked.

At that, his face had grown a ruddy red. He slammed the empty glass on the table-top and stood up.

"All right, you man-sized bully boy," he threatened. "The next time you get into a brawl, call on Cap'n Wingate. He'll show you who's the right man with knife or pistol!"

So, with my disappearance, Wingate abandoned his former plans, turned the tramp schooner over to the first mate and went ashore with Helen and George Weston. I like to think now that the Captain, for all his shouting, was really worried about my failure to meet Weston. At least, during the next twenty-four hours, Wingate had ample time to prove his sincerity.

CHAPTER III

Death Drives a Cart

I AWAKENED with a terrific pain in my jaw. Gradually, I realized that I had been tossed under a pile of sugar-cane and straw. The floor beneath me was bouncing about. Fully awakened at last, I heard the rough, grating sound of wheels in deep sand. Afraid to betray myself, I searched about under the stuff with a cautious hand. My coat was missing and the gun also. My shirt was torn and I felt sticky moisture on my lips.

Another man lay at my side.

I touched him first with a finger tip and the skin of his arm was already cold and growing stiff. It must have been the black who attacked me with the cane knife. As silently as possible, I explored his body. In one pocket, I found a closed knife. Open, it consisted of a seven-inch blade and as much handle. A valuable weapon. My head must be above the rear wheels. Cautiously, I edged backward.

The wheels stopped rolling. Had we reached the end of the journey? No! A voice sounded above, low and guttural, and the wheels turned again, more slowly than before. Dust filled my nose and I tried to keep from sneezing.

Before the cart had gone ten feet farther, I had dropped to the ground and covered the distance to the thick jungle that bordered the road. It was with great relief that I watched my friend of the scarred chin ride unsuspectingly into the heavy forest that borders Cape Haitian.

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My first plan was to follow the cart. To find out where he was taking his cargo of death.

George Weston was waiting for me somewhere in Cape Haitian. Better see him and get a full explanation before riding into this thing blindly. Keeping well out of sight of the road, I started back toward the red roofs of the village.

A closed carriage came from the town and up the long hill toward me. The gray-headed man, who drove, looked familiar. As they drew abreast of me, I stepped from the trees.

"George — George Weston. How about a lift?"

I had meant to sound casual, but my voice must have startled them all. In five minutes, I had told my story and revived our old friendship. Helen Weston was more lovely than ever, with a sweetness that seemed unreal.

"But, why did you go with the man?" Weston asked when I had told my story.

"I guess I'm an eternal damn fool," I admitted. "It looked like trouble and I wanted to get to the reason behind it.

"Well," Captain Wingate said a little sourly, "You're safe now, so I can return to the ship."

"But the fun is only starting," I protested. "Scar Chin will be back. George has a story to tell us and I'd like you to be around."

Wingate flushed with pleasure.

"I'm not really needed," he protested weakly.

Helen Weston looked at the roly-poly captain.

"Oh! But you are, Captain Wingate. Father called Mr. Wells down here because he could trust him. We need every man we can get. . . ."

I DID not hear Wingate's reply. My attention was focused on a small ox-drawn wagon that moved toward us, going in the opposite direction.

The others in the carriage had no reason to notice the oxen or the load of cane and straw. They might have noticed the man with the scarred chin, if he had been driving.

On the board that crossed the front of the old conveyance, a black man sat holding his whip as though it were unreal and of no use to him. He paid no heed to us, but went by slowly, his head facing directly ahead.

I was staring straight at the man who had laid at my side in the wagon. The man I had shot in the chest at the waterfront. He could not be alive, yet even as I watched, he lifted his whip, spoke to the oxen, and brought it down smartly on their backs.

"Don't you agree with me Chris?"

"What's that?" I whipped around, perspiration standing on my forehead. Weston was staring at me in bewilderment. "Sorry, I didn't hear . . ."

"Why, you look as though you'd seen . . ."

"A ghost," I admitted. "That's exactly what I saw."

I told them about the man on the ox cart. Wingate exploded.

"Another story to get me away from my ship," he said. "Damn fairy tales. Dead men don't drixe oxen."

George Weston had been impressed by my story. For several minutes, we were silent. Wingate showed no anxiety to return to Cape Haitian and the carriage went steadily forward.

"You'd be surprised," Weston said finally. "Here, dead men do live. Worse than that, they're dangerous!"

CHAPTER IV

The Whip of Hate

A SUDDEN tropical storm whipped across the bay of Cape Haitian,

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churning the blue waters to muddy froth. It caught us on the road as our horses trotted toward San Souci. The palace itself, Christophe's finest, was hidden in a mist of rain. The mid-day storm gave it a sinister, grim look that I had never noticed when I was in Haiti before.

We tied the horses in the open by the dwindling road and followed George Weston up the age-worn steps and across high terraces that lead to the upper stories. He turned once with a smile.

"I am here primarily to study the history of King Henri," he explained. "San Souci seemed to be the ideal place."

The palace was in bad condition. The windows and doors were rotted with age. The gaping holes reminded me of the toothless grins of old men.

Yet it was rugged and beautiful. We stopped before a solid oaken door and Weston lifted the heavy ring and drew it open.

There was a small room behind the panel, warm and well furnished.

"This is our home—for the present," Helen said, leading us across the carpeted floor. "We have books for dad and oils for my hobby of painting. A stove and a well-stocked larder take care of our needs."

"Helen will get some food." Weston removed his drenched coat and we followed his example. "After you've eaten, Captain Wingate can take the carriage back to Cape Haitian. We have horses here."

Wingate scowled.

"Who says I'm going back?" he demanded.

"Why—why, I thought . . ." Weston protested.

It was time that I stepped in to save the poor captain's pride.

"Wingate has decided to stay and help us see this thing through," I explained. "He told me as we came in."

"I said no such . . ."

The captain started to bluster, hesitated and a broad grin crossed his red face.

"All right," he admitted. "I'm interested in dead men who ride about in broad daylight. The good ship *Berwain* can go hang for the time being. They'll pick me up on the next trip, if that lousy first mate can steer a course to New York and back."

George Weston had a strange tale to tell. In justice to the man, I can add nothing to what he told us as we sat in the bright light of the gas lantern that black afternoon. The thunder and lightning crashed above our heads and the rain fell in torrents about the dead palace of Christophe.

WESTON started his story over a cup of steaming coffee. The small room was pleasantly furnished with chairs and a divan. I confess I watched Helen Weston with renewed interest as she lay curled like a comfortable doll on the divan. Her lips were rounded into a small oval and her attention was focused on the old man.

"We had trouble here," Weston began, "within a week after we came. Liberté, a black boy whom we hired to work with us, told of seeing strange men about the palace. He was never able to show them to us. I obtained permission from government officials to visit La Ferriere, King Christophe's citadel."

"That's the fort he built when he was ruling Haiti, isn't it?" Wingate asked.

Weston nodded.

"A fort built by dead men," he said. "At least, men who were dead to life as we know it. Every rock of that edifice was dragged into place by hands that dripped blood and minds that re-

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fused to function from the pain they underwent.

"From the first, we heard a strange tale that Henri Christophe had returned. I discounted it at first. Then I ran across an old manuscript. It seems that Christophe had pounded the life from his last slave. Mobs of free blacks were about to murder him. He shot himself with a . . . But wait, I'll show you."

Weston reached into the book shelf at his elbow and drew down a thin volume. It was mildewed with age and the pages stuck together as he opened it across his knee. He read softly from one of the pages.

"Christophe had one avenue of escape. In the cabinet beside him was a small pearl-handled pistol. He had constructed a bullet of solid gold. The bullet was in the possession of a voodoo priest for many months. With the magic bullet, Christophe shot himself to death before the mob came. He was interned at LaFerriere, but it is written that in the gold lay a power that one day would bring life to Christophe and destruction once more to the peoples of Haiti. . . ."

I was greatly impressed by the passage. I took it from Weston's fingers and studied it carefully.

"Written by a French court attache who was visiting the court here at San Souci at the time," Weston explained. "As fantastic as it sounds, King Henri Christophe is alive again. He is building LaFerriere mightier than before. Every native in Haiti awaits a summons to death."

"Bah!" Wingate stood up impatiently. "Fairy tale; a damn fairy tale! Can't believe it."

Weston smiled wanly.

"Neither could I," he admitted. "Not until I visted LaFerriere."

"Now, don't tell me you've seen the deceased monarch," I begged. "After all, Weston, I came down here to help. I can't start out by believing in ghosts."

Weston's face was white. He gripped the arms of his chair as though afraid of what he was about to say.

"I never reached LaFerriere," he confessed. "On the last steep climb to the gate, I heard voices in the opening. From the trees, I watched a strange band of naked black men toiling up the slopes. They were dragging a stone half as big as this room."

He stopped talking, sipped his coffee as though he expected it to help.

"A great hulking brute stood by those men. Every time one of them slackened his grip on the rope, this giant brought a barbed whip down across his back. I stood there for a while and then I turned and ran. I ran nearly every foot of the way back here. When I arrived, Helen tells me I looked more dead than alive."

"But not ghosts," I said. "Surely these men were human—something you could understand."

"The man with the whip," Weston answered haltingly, *"was Mano Franca, the same scar-chinned black who tried to kidnap you this afternoon."*

CHAPTER V

The Tomb Is Gone

AFTER hearing Weston's story of the scar-faced Negro, it was obvious that I would make the trip to LaFerriere at the first opportunity. Weston held the position of a sane man attempting to convince others of an insane idea. If what he had seen was an actuality and not a dream, events had taken a serious turn. Many of the natives had disappeared during the past three or four months. More were going nightly.

Into the slave gangs of Henri Chris-

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tophe? Into a ghost army? Weston said yes. He wanted me to see it with my own eyes. To help him in his one-man crusade against a ghost king.

We started for LaFerriere at sundown. Just before evening, the storm cleared. The sun came out low and red against the steaming jungle and sank into blackness. Night birds took up their strange calls and the palace resounded to ghostly echoes in the open corridors.

"I hate to take Helen," Weston said, when the horses were saddled. "I have no choice. I can't leave her here alone."

"As though I would even consider it." Helen Weston's eyes were flashing. "I love going along. We'll keep well hidden."

The trail to LaFerriere was narrow and well-covered with jungle brush and vines. We were all clad in raincoats and managed to keep fairly dry, despite the water dripping from the foliage overhead.

The moon came out presently. A high mountain, jagged and rock covered reared up ahead of us through the trees.

Weston reined his horse close to mine and we stopped.

"LaFerriere," he breathed.

I had seen Christophe's castle before, but at night and with the stories of the afternoon still in my mind, it was awesome.

It swept on upward almost to the clouds above it. Solid, smooth walls towered until my neck was tired from bending upward.

"My God," Wingate breathed. "How did they ever build it?"

"Slaves," Weston answered quietly. "Slaves and blood and death. Now it's happening all over again."

We rode on slowly in single file. Wingate was at the rear and Weston led the way. The girl was behind me on the steep trail. A soft sound came from behind. It was hardly noticeable, but somehow sinister.

Swish.

I twisted about in the saddle. Two horses still plodded upward. Wingate and Helen Weston were gone. Gone so completely that no sign of them was visible in the darkness of the jungle.

I shouted to Weston to halt and swung quickly from my horse. Not a moment too soon. A long, vine rope swished down at the place I had occupied in the saddle. Its loop dangled there for an instant and swung up again into the tree. On one knee, I drew the service pistol Weston had given me and fired. No sound came from above. A high pitched scream of terror cut the stillness and its echo pounded back and forth across the wooded slope. I knew it was Helen Weston.

FOR the first time I was aware that Weston himself was in trouble. He seemed to be threshing about in the undergrowth ahead. I ran forward in time to see a black bending over him with a huge club raised to strike. I lfted my gun and fired. The black gave a howl of pain and toppled back into the brush. Weston arose. His throat was marked with blue-black streaks where iron fingers had fastened.

"Helen?" His eyes were terror stricken. "Is she safe?"

I shook my head.

"They got her and Wingate, both. She's still alive. I heard her scream from the slopes above us."

We ran up the trail. I fancied that footsteps in the jungle followed our own. Once I held Weston back, listening. If I were right, our followers were clever. As long as we stood still, no sound came from the jungle. LaFerriere was close now. I could see a momentary flash of light against its

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wall. It seemed as though a door opened and closed quickly at the base of the structure. Then the jungle was silent again and the footsteps that had followed our own were gone.

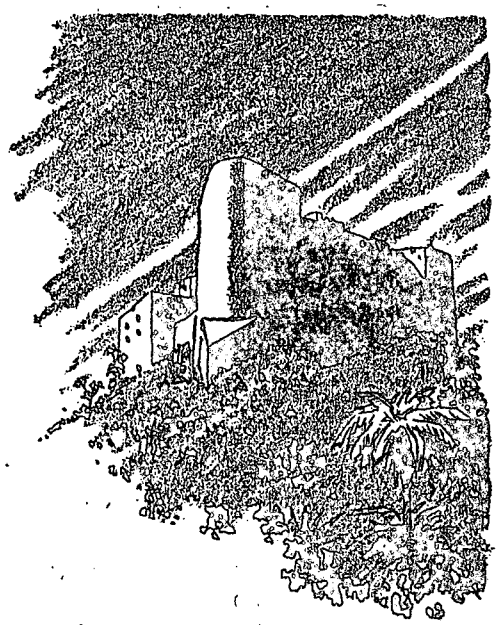
I believe my shot had frightened the blacks away. Weston was frantic for Helen's safety and I was in no better condition. Carefully, we made our way forward with pistols drawn. It seemed useless to approach such a place without more protection. We had no choice. Wingate and Helen Weston had evidently been carried beyond those walls. We had to find them while there was yet time. God alone knew what tortures were planned for them. Close to the wall of LaFerriere now, Weston took my arm and we halted.

"I know of a small entrance on the far side," he whispered tensely. "It opens into the court close to Christophe's tomb. I've used it often to avoid the main gate."

I nodded, released the safety catch on my pistol and followed him along the wall. The valley below was moon-washed and bright. Occasional night birds swished by in the gloom, their bright feathers flashing in the uncertain light. Within LaFerriere all was silent. I felt as though we were being watched every moment.

We rounded the last corner and Weston located a small stone door. In its center was an iron ring which he pulled at cautiously. The door, hardly, two feet square, opened easily.

On my knees, I looked through the aperture. Its sides were nearly six feet thick. Inside, the moon flooded a huge empty court. I went through the small tunnel, working my way forward on my stomach. The gun was between my teeth. Weston followed and we stood up. The flooring was worn smooth with many footsteps. A gasp escaped Weston's lips.



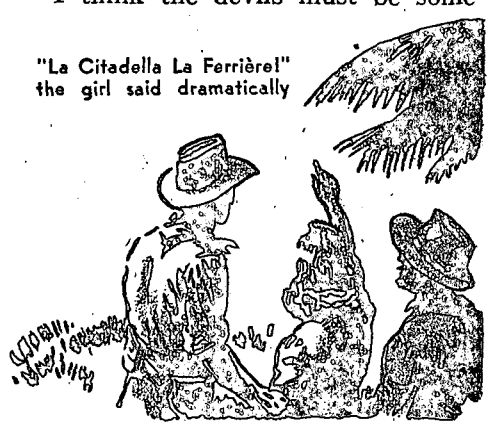
"The tomb! *Christophe's tomb is gone!*"

CHAPTER VI

I Cannot Die

I HAD never been within the walls of LaFerriere, but I realized the implications of his words. Henri Christophe had been buried in the court under a small, roofed tomb. There was no doubt, now, in our minds that he was alive. No such structure broke the smoothness of the court.

"I think the devils must be some-



"La Citadella La Ferrière!" the girl said dramatically

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where within the inner walls," Weston whispered suddenly. "Otherwise we could never have gotten this far safely."

We made our way across the court, staying in the shadows as much as we could. Weston had spent many hours here before the citadel became haunted by the return of its master. Also, with Helen's help, he had mapped every corridor. I stayed close behind him as we entered the first row of gun chambers which lined the opposite wall.

Every cannon had been pushed carefully into place and beside them, cannon balls were neatly stacked for action. The halls were clean and lined with hanging lanterns. This was no fort of the dead. As old as the weapons were, I realized they could hold off anything short of an attack by a well-organized army.

Clang.

The sound of a closing door came from the room below.

"Wait!" Weston stopped short as we drew into one of the small rooms that contained the guns.

"Someone . . . below."

For a few moments, no further sound troubled the empty halls. Then came the cry of a girl. Helen Weston's voice filled with horror and fear.

"No! Don't leave me! Please."

"The dungeons," Weston said. "This way."

Half running, I went along the hall with him. He stopped before one of the canons leaned against it and the thing moved easily to one side. A black, yawning hole opened beside it. He leaned over the hole, looking downward anxiously.

'Thank God," he said. "This is one of the old passages I discovered. I'm glad they failed to guard it."

I could hear faint voices drifting up from below. Weston dropped into the pit quickly and I heard his footsteps on the stone steps. I followed, paced myself to the uneven steps and hurried into the inkwell he had opened. Ahead, I could hear the heavy, guttural voices. I did not hear Helen Weston again as we went down into the pits below LaFerriere.

They had depended on Weston's knowledge to lead him here. Fools that we were, we walked into their trap, baited with our own lives. The stairway ended and we were in a narrow, low tunnel. Water dripped from above and to avoid it, I bowed my head, holding the pistol under my coat.

Weston, frightened for Helen, ran straight into the room before he could determine whether or not it was safe to do so. We must have looked like two silly school boys, suddenly standing there with a small army of wicked-looking blacks on all sides of us. I twisted about suddenly, pistol drawn and then stopped short.

THE chamber was perhaps fifty feet long. More than a hundred blacks were crowded into it. They lined the walls, knives drawn, waiting for a command. Then I saw the ghost king of Haiti. Henri Christophe was standing at the far end of the chamber. He was dressed in clothing of the Sixteenth Century French Court. He looked like a grotesque, punch-drunk prize fighter attending a fancy dress ball. Silk gloves, knee breeches and silk stockings. His head protruded from a ruffled collar, his eyes staring at us, a wide grin on his face.

"Welcome!" His lips were thick and red. "We have just placed our queen on the throne. It is a fitting place for a white woman."

The sneer on his lips told me that Helen Weston was more than a queen. She was a symbol of his hatred for the

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whites. A symbol that Christophe had dragged here to degrade, that his men could see what happened to the white men and women who defied him.

Helen sat on a huge throne in the shadows beyond Christope. Her dress was torn and dirty. Her eyes were wide with terror and they held mine beseechingly.

She sat on a throne of human bones. The thing was fashioned cunningly of skulls, ribs and every part of the human skeleton. Helen's wrists were bound firmly to the arms of the chair and the thongs had been drawn through the vacant eye sockets of two human skulls.

The heavy figure of Captain Wingate was stretched on the floor at her feet. His arms and ankles had been bound to stakes in the floor. A wide gash was visible at the hairline of his head. Blood oozed from it freely and the man looked more dead than alive.

"Pinion them to the walls." It was Christophe who spoke.

For an instant I saw red. If we are to die, I thought, then we'll die the hard way. My pistol whipped up until it pointed straight at his head.

"Tell them to stay away," I shouted. "If one man steps forward, I'll shoot."

He seemed taken aback for an instant. Then that same diabolical grin crossed his face.

"You are not aware of my powers," he said silkily. "No gunshot will harm me."

The blacks closed in slowly, waiting for a chance to throw me.

"Don't shoot." It was Weston, pleading.

It was too late. One huge Negro sprang. As he did so, I brought him down with a shot in the belly. Pivoting, I fired three more shots at Henri Christophe. I saw them hit and plow into his shirt. I saw the holes, round and well defined. Yet, he did not waver. No blood came from his body. The grin did not change. My arms were pinned back quickly, now, and struggle as I might, I could not throw them off. It was a useless struggle. I could not take my eyes from the ghost king. He stood there quietly, waiting for me to realize the foolishness of my attempt. I saw the man with the scarred chin close in, a heavy club in his hands. His face blotted out the rest of the room. My arms were held tightly behind me. I saw the club descend, shouted an oath of hate into his sweating face; then stars danced evilly through my brain.

CHAPTER VII

The Whip

THE blacks had left the dungeon finally. Henri Christophe showed no sign of pain at the gunshots I had inflicted. Without further words, Weston and I were thrown on our backs and shackled to iron rings that hung from the wall. The room was silent for what seemed hours. Helen Weston told her father how they had been dragged here and used as bait to capture us. She managed to keep her nerve now that we were with her. Time dragged on and no one came to see that I was alive.

Then they were troubled by what sounded like approaching footsteps beyond the wall of the dungeon. A section of stonework came away slowly and an old woman came into the cell. She stood alone at the far end of the room. Her body was swathed in foul, gray cloth. She appeared to be ageless, with dried skin and long witch-like fingers. When she opened her mouth to speak, her gums were gray and toothless. The voice, however, was kindly.

"You must all be quiet," she said

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commandingly. "I will take those whom I am able to free."

"Who are you?" Helen demanded, as the old woman approached her.

The visitor worked over Helen's bonds, freeing her wordlessly. Then, as she freed Wingate and helped him to his feet, she said:

"It is of no importance. I am nameless now." Then, turning to Weston, "I cannot free you or the other of your chains. I will lead your daughter and this fat one to safety. It will be up to them to return for you."

Captain Wingate rebelled at this. He tried desperately to free us both. At last, sweating at the heavy rings that were buried in the wall he gave up.

"I'll get to my ship," he told Weston. "They won't sail before tonight. We've been carrying three Browning machine guns since the war broke out. I'll get the crew and those guns. We'll come back and blow this damned death house off the map."

Helen had been binding the wound on my head. She finished, kissed her father and then turning to me, leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. I'm afraid I blushed a little.

I struggled up to a sitting position. "I'm glad they got out of this mess." I said. "I wonder where the old woman took them."

Weston shook his head.

"I have only one solution. Henri Christophe had a tunnel dug from here to Sans Souci. He murdered everyone who worked on it, so that the secret would remain his own. He evidently had no fear of our locating it. The thing isn't shown on any of the maps."

"Then the woman? How could she know of it?"

Weston shook his head slowly.

"I can only answer riddles with riddles," he said slowly. "How did she know of us? Why should she take the chance to come to our rescue when we don't even know her?"

My head felt better under the tight bandage. I thought of Helen and the kiss she had given me. Weston seemed to read my thoughts.

"Helen thinks a lot of you, Chris," he said.

Footsteps sounded in the hall leading to our prison.

Weston said shortly, "Wait until they discover Helen and Wingate are missing."

I WATCHED the small door that lead from the dungeon. The lower portion of a black man became visible and he bent his shoulders to enter the door. It was the man with the scarred chin, Mano Franca. His features were contorted with anger and his eyes widened until the whites of them showed. He looked around the room quickly. Then he ran swiftly toward me, put his hands under my armpits and dragged me upright. His teeth were yellow and clenched.

"The woman," he snarled. "The woman and the fat one. Where are they?"

I shrugged my shoulders and he dropped me rudely to the floor. I swore under my breath at the chains that kept me from resisting. He repeated his question to Weston, shaking the old man violently. Weston didn't trouble himself to answer. Mano Franca was violently angry, and yet puzzled. It was clear that he knew of no opening to the dungeon other than the one through which he had come. I believe that a strange superstitious fear swept through him at that moment. A fear that lay dormant in the hearts of all the blacks. He turned on his heel and dashed from the dungeon. His voice, thick and guttural, drifted back as he retreated down the tunnel.

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"Now we're in for it," Weston groaned. "He'll be back with the whole mob of them."

"I wish I could get one arm loose." I tried to jerk free the ring that held my right wrist to the wall. It was useless. The chains were heavy and one link was buried deep in granite. Many voices sounded in the tunnel. I recognized the anxious, hurried voice of the scar-chinned black and the heavy, measured tone of Henri Christophe. They came in quickly, and Christophe stood alone at the door while four of his men went quickly about the room.

One man, and one alone, knew how Wingate had escaped. Henri Christophe stood quietly, his huge body tense. His eyes were not on us, but on the section of wall through which the two missing prisoners had escaped. Slowly, the monarch's eyes swept around and stopped on mine. They were black as night, boring straight into me. He seemed to be saying:

"You know the secret of the tunnel, but it will do you no good."

He shouted something to his men in a strange, primitive language I did not understand and they retreated to the tunnel behind him. Mano Franca went last, seemingly reluctant to miss this chance to inflict further torture on our already exhausted bodies.

SOON we were alone with the ghost king, Henri Christophe. He walked across the cell deliberately, raised the heavy riding crop in his thick hand and brought it down sharply across my face. If I had been free at that moment, I would have torn that arm from its shoulder. My whole body burned with pain and hatred of him.

"Who helped the white ones to escape?" His voice was harsh and cold. "Tell me, before I beat the words from you!"

Weston raised himself against the wall, trying to stand upright under the weight of the chains.

"You're bluffing," he said slowly. "We won't tell you a thing. They'll be back with troops soon. You'll regret every minute you've kept us prisoners here."

Christophe's whole body straightened and swelled with pride. He turned toward Weston.

"All the troops in Haiti could not drive me from LaFerriere," he roared. "I am King of Haiti. Do you understand? I am ruler of all I survey from the towers of this place. No man can take from me what I have."

I guess at that moment I believed him. I believed that Henri Christophe was strong enough to carry out his boast. The only safety we had now was to frighten him in some manner. To make him think that immense armies would come here to attack him.

"You are not afraid of the United States Army?" I asked with as much sarcasm as I could muster.

He hesitated in his reply and then a broad grin covered his thick face.

"I am not afraid of God *or* the United States Army," he answered. "And I am even less afraid that such an army will march against our tiny republic when World matters are so threatening."

So that was it! The man must have known. Must have been able to control his own return to the world, to place himself in Haiti when world problems were all important. I decided to go on talking. To stall until Wingate and the girl had time to do something for us. But Christophe was not in a listening mood. He strode quickly toward the door and his voice roared up the passage.

"Franca! The chains! Throw these men into the slave gang."

Mano Franca must have been wait-

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ing close by. He entered the cell like a panther, and in his arms he carried two lengths of heavy chains. My arms were jerked upward rudely and released. In three minutes Weston and myself were standing in the center of the cell, both our legs bound in short lengths of heavy metal. I could take only short steps or find myself tripped and sprawling full length on the floor.

"March!"

We had been stripped to the waist and the quick flexing of Christophe's heavy arm brought the leather strap down across my bare shoulders. We went up the tunnel slowly and into the open air of the court. It was daylight now, and the activity within LaFerriere had been increased tenfold. The court itself was perhaps five hundred feet square. Above us were other open spots, built atop the wide walls. Everywhere slaves toiled in chains like the ones we wore. They were, for the most part, clean smooth-skinned blacks brought from the sugar plantations around Haiti. Their faces wore set expressions and their bodies moved as puppets. At the sight of Christophe and Mano Franca, they increased their speed.

GREAT guns had been rolled into place at the slits of the walls. Cannon balls were stacked neatly in pyramids along the gun embrasures. The place was as neat and well-cleaned as the deck of a battle ship.

"Take them to the valley and put them into the line of builders." Henri Christophe dismissed us with a curt nod of his head.

Weston leaned close to me.

"Keep your chin up," he whispered. "We're in for it. They'll make us haul rocks up the hill to rebuild the walls."

The scar-chinned Franca silenced him with a well-placed blow of the whip and we both stood with bowed heads. It was useless to fight now. Perhaps later we'd have our chance.

With a number of slaves that Franca collected hurriedly from court, we were driven like animals toward the heavy door of the fort. The doors swung open and the green, sun-flooded valley was visible below.

"March!"

A heavy crack of the whip sent me reeling forward through the gate. Franca was close behind. When he brought that thing down again, I could grab the end of it and upset him quickly.

"Easy." Weston had divined my thoughts. "You can do nothing yet. We'll have our chance."

The whip descended again, cracking around my bare waist. That wickedly scarred chin was due for some punishment before I was through. Mano Franca would have to whip hard and watch me closely, I decided. I'd pay him back, with interest, when Wingate returned.

CHAPTER XIII

Wingate Gets Tough

IT WAS to be some time before Helen Weston and the ruddy-faced Wingate would be of further help to us. They had gone through the secret tunnel quickly, feeling their way in the inky blackness. Once Wingate stopped Helen by placing a thick hand on her arm. The old woman who led them was already several yards ahead in the musty crypt.

"Keep your eyes open," he whispered hoarsely. "God knows what this old dame is up to. She may murder us both before we get out of here."

Notwithstanding Wingate's warning, Helen trusted the one who guided them. Her trust was well-placed. They

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reached the blank end of the tunnel and the woman fumbled against the wall ahead of them. A hidden mechanism started to purr within the wall and daylight flooded the place. They were in the halls of San Souci.

"Jerusalem!" Wingate said. "Right back where we started from."

The woman went ahead of them and stood in the huge hall of the palace. They studied her carefully now, with the light full on her features. She seemed almost ageless, her face skinny and the bones of her elbows sticking out, taut and brown under her skin. Her lips were purple and cracked and the smile she gave them was almost a grimace.

"You are safe now," she said, her voice like a cracked record. "Go to Cape Haitian at once and tell the whites there to leave Haiti. They will all die unless you do this."

Helen Weston was a clever girl. She knew that this woman was playing for higher stakes than seemed evident at first glance. She wanted to make friends with her.

"Why do you say this?" she asked kindly. "You have a reason for freeing us, for giving us this warning."

The three of them were standing in a small group under the broken roof of a wild and desolate jungle palace. The sun streamed downward. A brightly colored cockatoo spread its feathers in the sun to dry. Wingate confessed that he wanted to leave without further talking. He felt safer with a gun or a knife to fight with. He had nothing. The woman hesitated before she attempted to answer Helen Weston. At last, she turned and walked swiftly from them. They followed, and as she walked, her voice drifted back.

"Christophe has returned to rule Haiti. Before a week is gone, the blacks will rise and kill every white man, woman or child on the island. By the time this has been done, Christophe will be safe from any assault. You cannot save the two you left behind. It is better that you leave before it is too late."

They reached the outer door to the great room. Before them, Wingate recognized the road, our carriage still tied beside it.

Taking Helen's arm, he drew her down the wide steps.

"Better keep our plans to ourselves," he said quietly. "She may not be so friendly if we don't agree with her."

Helen nodded. She turned toward the old woman who had stopped at the top of the steps.

"We thank you for helping us," she said. "We hope you will not suffer. If you need us again . . ."

The woman grinned. Her mouth was defiant and a thin cackle came from between her toothless gums.

"Never fear," she answered, "Henri Christophe cannot harm *me*."

She turned and disappeared into the palace. Wingate turned toward the carriage and a shiver played up and down his back.

"Let's get out of the cursed place," he said. "This is something we can't fight alone."

ON THEIR quick ride down to Cape Haitian, they planned their strategy for action.

"I've got eighteen men in my crew," Wingate explained as the horses trotted along the sandy road. "Three Brownings should cause a lot of trouble if we can once get inside the wall of La Ferriere."

Helen protested.

"But three guns against how many hundreds? I think that half the population is ready to fight for this ghost king."

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Wingate nodded his head grimly.

"I know," he agreed. "There are no American troops stationed here since the marines left. The American consul would laugh at our story. We dare not go to the Gendarmerie. They may be mixed up in this mess on Christophe's side."

They were silent after that. The sun moved higher into the cloudless sky and the bay of Cape Haitian became visible, a huge half circle of blue at the foot of the hill down which they rode.

Wingate's ship still rode at anchor in the bay. Within an hour he had his plan before the crew. They were ready and anxious to escape the routine of ship life. A good fight sounded welcome to them.

Under the cover of night, Wingate, Helen Weston, the crew and three gleaming machine guns went ashore in the ship's boats. They climbed into waiting carriages and went swiftly along the road toward the citadel of LaFerriere.

CHAPTER IX

Attack the Impossible

THAT day in chains was intolerable for me, and much worse, I'm afraid, for poor Weston. The sun set quickly in a great red ball over our shoulders. We had toiled upward hour after hour, a hundred sweating men, with ropes tied around our waists. Behind us, like a wheelless juggernaut, a granite boulder inched upward under our combined strength. Every man who hesitated received three lashes across the face and body. The scarred chin of Mano Franca quivered in delight as he administered this punishment.

We were close to the gate now and it was already dark. Weston was toiling close to my side, great beads of sweat standing out on his body. He had raw, deep gashes where the whip had paid special attention to his tender white skin.

"We've got to do something fast," I whispered, hoping Franca was far enough away that my voice would escape his attention. "Once inside the wall and we have to go through another day of this."

Weston nodded slightly. He was either too tired or too weak to reply.

"The boulder," I whispered again. "If we were able to release our weight and trip a couple of the men. It might roll backward."

Weston's eyes widened as he turned to me.

"But in these chains . . ." He stopped abruptly. The scarred-chin black was close to us.

The slaves were humming softly behind us. It was a low, wild chant of fear and hate. I would go crazy facing this any longer. Mano Franca passed behind us and down the line.

"Pull as hard as you can," I told Weston. "Then, when I touch your arm in the darkness, throw yourself back with all your strength against the man behind."

I knew from the way he nodded that he felt we had little chance to escape. We were at the gate now. It was pitch black outside. A few lanterns hung from the wall above. Every man in the double line of blacks was straining those last feet. Weston and I were placed at the lead of each line. Franca was far down the hill, urging the stragglers with his great whip.

"*Now!*" I shouted and released my weight from the pull rope. I tackled the man behind me with all the force I could muster. I knew that Weston was doing likewise. High-pitched screams of fear arose. The slaves were going down like tenpins under the force of

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the weight and the lack of pull from above. Franca's great voice boomed out in anger and the whip renewed its fury.

Now was our chance. The dark ground was covered with the bodies. They rolled backward, pulling me with them. The boulder lost its solid hold on the earth and plowed backward. With feverish fingers, I jerked the rope from my waist and was free. Weston was already at my side. I started running toward the jungle that bordered the path. The chains between my ankles tripped me and I fell headlong among the creepers. Weston was beside me, helping me to my feet.

"We've got to go cautiously," he urged. "I know a way. Follow me but try not to fall again."

A CRY of anger drifted up from behind. The boulder had rolled downward, dragging some of the men to their deaths. Others were behind us, rushing in all directions through the jungle. A gun shot cracked out; a long moment of hesitation, and then another. Thank God that the weapons they used were a hundred years old. It took time to load them and they were little better than pea-shooters in the thick gloom.

We were going more slowly now. I found that I would hop along a foot at a time and remain upright. Weston was ahead, moving deliberately into the thickest creepers. The sounds behind grew fainter and died in the night. At last, he stopped.

"In an hour they'll have a searching party after us." He sat down on a rotted section of mahogany log. "We've got to find the road and stay close to it. We can't fight until we rid ourselves of these shackles."

I nodded, saving my voice and we went onward. Several times, we fell forward, face down in the slime and mud of the lower valley. At last we came out on the road to Cape Haitian and Weston held up a cautioning arm.

"Wait," he said. "Something's coming toward us . . ."

We stood in the brush close to the sandy strip. Three carriages came along the sand without lights. They were close before I saw the round-faced Wingate riding astride one of the horses on the lead carriage.

"Cap'n," I shouted and—forgetting my chains—tried to run into the road before him. "It's Wells! Weston and I escaped."

Those infernal chains tripped me and I fell head-first into the dust as the first carriage stopped. Wingate dropped from his mount and came to my rescue. Soon the entire group of men were about us.

"Oh Dad! Dad!" Helen Weston ran toward us from the last coach. Her arms swept about her father. "I'm so glad you're free." She saw for the first time that the skin of his back and shoulders was cut and torn.

"Those devils! Those—those . . ."

"There, there." Weston patted her awkwardly as she burst into tears. She dried her eyes quickly and came to me.

"Chris, are you all right?"

It was the first time she had called me by my first name. I was suddenly proud and felt much better than I had for a long time.

I took her hand and clasped it tightly.

"Fine," I agreed. "But I'd like to get these chains off."

Wingate whispered to one of his men who then went back to the carriage.

"We have files," the Captain explained. "Thought I'd bring them along. I remembered those chains in the cell."

IN TEN minutes we were free of our bonds. With my back treated and

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a shirt once more across my shoulders, I felt much better.

"And now," Wingate said, "we'll go back and clean up on the little self-made God. I'll venture his skin will feel the sting of our little hornets."

He patted the shining barrel of a Browning that lay across the seat in front of us.

While we rode, Wingate told us of the old woman who had freed them.

"And she's right, too," Helen chimed in. "Cape Haitian is strangely quiet. We saw no one in the streets. Every one seems to expect something terrible to happen. I believe this strange man Christophe holds a spell over them."

Wingate grunted.

"*Spell,* my eye," he protested. "He's got nothing a few well-placed tracer bullets won't stop."

Weston had been silent all this time. We were close to the trail that left the main road to LaFerriere when he looked up suddenly, a strange fear in his eyes.

"Wingate," he said, "I don't know exactly how to explain this. Henri Christophe is more than a man. Don't ask me how, but I think he has made of himself something that cannot be destroyed. Something that has thrown a fear into every black body on this island. I'm not so sure that your machine guns can destroy that."

I knew that Weston was choosing his words carefully. He was trying to tell the Captain that something that could not be destroyed was ahead of them. Wingate was impatient and angry at this seemingly outlawish attitude.

His mustache quivered a bit under his retort.

"Coming down from Florida," he said firmly, "we knocked three enemy planes out of the sky with those guns. My men have fought off a sub crew with side arms and their bare hands. We'll take our fighting as it comes."

"I know, but this is . . ."

Wingate jerked at the reins of his horses and the carriage halted.

"You're going to tell me this is different," he said. "Now I'll tell you what *I* think. This—this ghost king you're afraid of isn't any more ghost than I am. He's got a lot of old cannons and he dresses up to scare hell out of these black-hearted savages. I'll make him walk the plank of his own danged fort before we're through with him. If you don't want to fight with us . . ."

Weston shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Captain," he said in a low voice. "You're a fighting man and I'm proud to be with you. Let's get on with it."

CHAPTER X

End of a Rope

DURING their conversation, I had been doing some thinking. It was useless to tell Wingate that I agreed with Weston. The small, gray-haired professor had been taught in the best schools of the world. He had imagination and an ability to balance it with good judgment. I was convinced that he was right. That Christophe *was* returned from the dead. I had proven that when I tried to destroy him in the cell. His flesh had been unharmed by the lead from my gun. More than that, I had shot a man in Cape Haitian. Later, that same man had driven calmly past me on the way back to town.

"Wingate," I said suddenly. "What do you plan to do once we reach LaFerriere? Somehow, we have to get that gate open."

The carriages had stopped. We were at the end of the road. From here on, it would be a sharp, creeper-choked climb to the base of the fort itself.

"We'll storm the gate with a log,"

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Wingate said. "Three men will cover our assault with the guns."

The men were out of the carriages, murmuring among themselves.

"I'd like to make a suggestion," I said.

Wingate nodded.

"It may mean a number of deaths if you go into the open. You're expected back, depend on that. Christophe will have his men placed at points atop the walls where they can subject us to a withering fire, yet remain out of reach of our guns."

Wingate seemed to think that over. The men were crowded about us on the road. The moon was high, now.

"You may be right," Wingate agreed. "What do you suggest, Wells?"

"Give me one of the guns," I said. "I'll manage to get it up alone and with a length of rope, I'll have everything I need. You make a lot of noise in the jungle around the main gate. Meanwhile, I'll find a hidden spot, throw the rope over the wall where it's lowest and climb it. I'll tie the gun to the bottom of the rope and draw it after me once I'm inside. From the wall, I can rake the inner court with fire while you storm the gate."

I could see that Wingate was impressed.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll send a man with you."

"No. The gun 's heavy, but I'll manage. I'd rather do this my own way."

Helen Weston walked toward me.

"I'm going with you," she said calmly.

In the brief instant that our eyes met, I know I wouldn't have it any other way. Funny how it breaks on you like that, with one silent, heart-touching look into deep eyes. If I left her with the men, God knows what might happen when they ran for the gate. Yes—she would be safer with me.

"Good," I agreed, and I knew she understood why I had not hesitated. I was never good at putting words together.

Our plans made, we worked swiftly.

WESTON took nine men and one of the guns and went up the main path toward the gate. Wingate followed with the remainder of the crew. They separated, should an attacking party meet them on the trail. Most of the men were armed with pistols. Helen insisted on carrying the heavy coil of rope and together we struck off at a tangent toward the side wall of La-Ferriere.

In twenty minutes, we had reached a niche in the wall, perhaps sixty yards from the gate. I knew that Weston and Wingate were thus far safe. No guns had been fired.

Wordlessly, we studied the wall above. It was studded with protruding boulders. At last, I found one close to the top that furnished a two foot jagged edge over which the rope could be tossed. I took the rope from Helen and tied one end of it carefully around the tripod of the gun. The belt of cartridges was in place. All was ready. I threw a loop of rope upward. It hit the rock and slipped away, falling around me. I tried again. This time it caught. A few sharp tugs convinced me it was caught securely.

Helen stood close to my side. I turned to her and saw that strange look in her eyes once more.

"Stay in the forest close to the wall," I whispered. "You'll be safe there. When it's over, I'll come back."

She said nothing, but her face was lifted to mine, tears glistening in her eyes. I felt a choking, helpless feeling in my throat. Bending quickly, I kissed her lips. Her response was immediate. We stood quietly, our arms about each

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other, then I pushed her away determinedly and reached for the rope.

A strange hush had fallen over the forest. It was as though a thousand eyes were upon me. As though the world was waiting for me to climb that rope to the wall above.

"In the jungle," I said once more. "Don't try to join the others or to run. You'll be where they can't find you."

She nodded and I swung upward, hand over hand. It was an easy task. I had climbed many a ship's rope in my day. The rocks scraped my body as I went upward, but the still air, the feeling of being free and ready to fight once more was wonderful. I stopped once, swaying back and forth in mid-air. Soft footsteps told me that Helen was leaving the wall. Upward again, my fingers closed over the top and I drew myself onto it. Not a sign of life marred the place. Then, like a crack of a cannon, the sound of a single pistol shot rocketed upward and re-echoed through the darkness. I crouched there, waiting.

Crack—crack—crack!

IN QUICK succession, three shots followed the first. A single cry of pain sounded near the gate. Yet, strain my eyes as I might, nothing was visible in the blackness. Feverishly, I started to pull the gun upward. In my desperate attempt to be ready for what came, my strength was twofold. The gun came much more easily than I had expected. It vibrated and scraped against the wall in the pitch blackness below me. My arms ached, but I drew it upward steadily, hand over hand. No more shots sounded. I still saw nothing move within or outside the citadel. I had a coil of rope at my feet now.

A shock of horror raced through my body as the first knot came into view. Feverishly, I drew the burden at the end of the rope over the edge of rock.

It was no gun that I had scraped and hauled up the stones of LaFerriere. Helen Weston, her mouth silenced by a gag, lay on the rock before me! Her body was still and her face was bloodless. Her wide eyes stared up into mine with the fear of death in them.

I was still bending over her, struggling to release the gag when harsh grating footsteps rang out behind me on the wall. I tried to spring upright, at the same time half freeing my pistol from the holster. My eyes swept up two lean, muscled legs and succeeded in reaching only the knees. Something broad and heavy struck my head a terrific blow and a wave of sickness swept over me. I felt Helen, soft and yielding, as I pitched forward on top of her. My head felt as though it had been split open with the force . . .

CHAPTER XI

The Golden Bullet

"OLD home week, I call it."

I opened my eyes slowly and was again aware of the intense pain that seemed to sweep wave upon wave across the top of my head and down my neck. I recognized the voice I had heard as Wingate's. We were once more in the cell. The room under LaFerriere. I forced my eyes open and tried to put a hand to my forehead. Both were chained securely to the wall.

"He's coming around," Weston's voice was clear to my ears.

I struggled to place my back against the wall where I had been lying and pushed myself upright. My head was clearer now but the intense pain remained. Wingate and Weston were both here. Both chained against the wall where they had been a few hours ago.

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Wingate started to talk in low tones.

"It was them damned savages," he said bitterly. "They attacked us in the jungle. Killed every man with their sugar knives. We didn't have a chance."

I remembered the still figure of Helen Weston lying before me on the wall.

"Helen?" I cried. "Did you see her? Is she safe?"

"Good Lord!" It was Weston. "Didn't you hide her?"

I told them quickly what had happened. When I finished, Wingate shook his head.

"Then she's within the citadel somewhere," he said. "We were surprised at the gate. We never saw you at all. They must have played some sort of a grisly joke on you by substituting her for the gun."

"I was an awful fool," Wingate said in a subdued voice. "If I hadn't been so sure of myself . . ."

Weston interrupted him.

"Forget it, Captain," he said. "You've been a real help all along. Without you, we'd stand no chance at all. As it is, we all have a chance to escape."

Half an hour dragged by without our hearing from our captors. Sounds drifted down occasionally from the halls above us and there seemed to be something astir within the citadel. The heavy rumbling of what I took to be cannon, occasionally broke the silence. Here was activity beyond anything I had yet seen.

Henri Christophe came himself to the cell. I am forced to say that in spite of my personal opinion of this man—or ghost, whichever he may have been—I did admire his spendid physique. Each time he appeared before us, there was no hint of doubt in himself.

Here was a giant black man, heavy with muscle and handsome as a barbaric cannibal. He wore the finest silk clothing. As he stood in the center of the room, looking at us with those deep black orbs, his shoulders were held high with purpose and his voice never lost its complete control of the situation.

"So you have come back to us," he said.

There was no answer. He expected none.

"You no doubt wonder what has happened to the white woman?"

"She is safe?" I asked aloud.

A suggestion of a sneer crossed his face.

"Only so long as you make no attempt to hinder me further," he answered.

Weston opened his mouth as though to speak, thought better of it and remained silent. It was evident that Christophe's interest, at least for the time being, lay in me.

"You are returning to my chambers with me," he said.

He released my chains and, rubbing the blood back into stiff wrists, I arose and went toward the door. Christophe came behind me, a wide-bladed knife swinging idly at his side.

WE WENT up into the open court. It was empty. We crossed it quickly and entered a small door on the opposite side. Inside, it was dark, but I felt my way forward and up a long flight of steps. I found myself on an upper balcony. A low wall ran across one side. All this time, my host had not spoken. Perhaps it was the clear, heady air that stirred him to almost pleasant conversation. Or perhaps he wished only to taunt us.

"I suppose you wonder greatly about my presence here?" he asked suddenly.

I turned, somewhat surprised, to find that he had pushed the knife into his belt and was standing with arms akim-

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bo, a grin on his face.

"I—I don't understand it all, if you'll have the truth," I admitted.

He chuckled.

"Don't worry your puny brain," he urged. "Sufficient to say, I am soon to rule this land with my hand and mine alone. There will be no place for men who think for themselves."

I admired certain qualities in this black giant, just as any man admires a worthy opponent.

"But Haiti," I protested. "Surely men here were doing well. They care for themselves. They function well with their present governing body."

"Bah!" His face expressed disgust. "These natives are but slaves. They are fit only to obey. They do not think for themselves."

He walked quickly to the wall that surrounded the edge of the fort and motioned for me to stand at his side. I joined him reluctantly, and he pointed out across the jungle.

"This is my land." He spoke with great emotion. "Many years ago I ruled all this. At last, because foreign powers meddled, I was forced to leave to avoid assassination. You have read that I shot myself rather than face death at the hands of my people?"

I nodded, wondering why he told me this.

"Do I look like one who is afraid to die?"

He faced me directly, his face close to mine. He seemed anxious that I understand him.

"No," I admitted. "On the contrary, you seem quite fearless."

He relaxed, leaned on the wall and stared again into the darkness.

"My people laughed when they found I had shot myself. They did not know that in that yellow bullet was the secret that would make possible my return here."

"So that was it," I thought. "The golden bullet of Henri Christophe."*

CHAPTER XII

Christophe Plays the Ace

HOPING to learn more, I said aloud: "But I don't understand. If you were dead, how . . ."

He looked thoughtful.

"Why I tell you this, I do not know," he confessed. "I suppose that, although I am ready to kill men who think for themselves it is refreshing to have one near me who understands my greatness.

"I did not die! One person alone knew the truth. She was a priestess

* Henri Christophe ruled Haiti as "King"—a black emperor, crowned by a French bishop on June 2, 1811. The man seemed to be a weird combination of sanity and madness. He built LaFerriere with the backs and hands of slaves. He compelled every grown man and woman to work fourteen hours a day. Haiti became rich and its wealth was Christophe's. Ships of all nations came to Haiti. Scholars and diplomats followed until men of every nation paid homage at the court of the King.

Every morning he rode the countryside, carrying a telescope. There was no hope for the unfortunate Haitian who was idle when Christophe's eye fell upon him. The King ruled with fear, and on the highest mountain he built his monument to fear—LaFerriere. Built it with the blood and sweat of his people.

Tens of thousands of men died to build that fort of horror. Three hundred and fifty cannons were dragged up the slopes by human animals. Barbed whips sent them ahead when they thought they could go no farther.

The citadel was finished but it was separated by miles from San Souci, his palace. Two men knew the secret of the tunnel. Christophe was one of them. The other, a mulatto engineer, died on the rocks below the castle wall.

Henri Christophe lived a haughty, proud life until revolt overthrew his kingdom. Of his death, it has been said, "He had, in his bedroom, a cabinet in which there lay a gold-chased pistol with a golden bullet. He pushed the bullet into the barrel carefully and primed the pistol.

"Hordes were already in the palace. A shot rang out in the King's room. They found him lying on the floor, a scarlet stain marring the white silk of his night-shirt."—Ed.

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who cast a spell on the golden bullet. It was she who saw that my body, with life suspended within it, was carefully placed in the vault here at LaFerriere. I need only remain there until my will was strong enough to break away. It happened a short time ago. Now I am free again, to live as I did before."

"And you expect me to believe this nonsense?" I *did* believe, but somehow I felt that to keep him talking would delay my own fate at least by minutes. Oddly, enough, he did not seem angry.

"What I tell you is the truth," he said slowly. "Except that this time, now that I am alive, I will remain so forever. No power of man can destroy me."

He left the wall and strode across the small court into one of the many halls. I followed, knowing it was expected of me. It would do no good to attempt escape now. Helen's life depended on my doing, at least for the present, exactly what Christophe asked of me.

There were lights ahead of us and as we entered the room at the end of the hall, I became aware of a difference in the atmosphere. It was a large, well-furnished chamber about forty feet square. Rich rugs covered the floor. The walls were lined with books and a number of early French chairs were placed about the room. Two people were here. The scar-chinned Mano Franca sat on his haunches near the far end of the room. A delighted grin covered his face. He was staring upward at Helen Weston, who sat by herself in one corner.

"A watch dog who knows but one master," Christophe said. "You see, the woman is safe, thus far."

As we entered, Helen arose and came toward me. Her face was very white, but otherwise she seemed well.

"Dad?" she asked anxiously. "Is he all right? Where is he?"

I took her small hands in my own.

"Both he and Wingate are safe," I answered.

"You know that the girl is safe." Christophe said. "She will remain safe if you and I can reach an agreement."

"You're doing the talking," I answered.

"Very well!" He crossed to a divan and sat down. "I need those guns you brought here."

"I imagine you've got them," I answered.

Christophe nodded.

"You are correct," he agreed. "But they are useless until I learn how they are fired."

HERE was my chance. If I could get close enough to turn one of the Brownings on his men, we might still win out.

"If you are thinking of destroying us with the weapons, dismiss the thought," he said calmly. "I am ready to give you all a chance to live—and no more."

I motioned for Helen to sit down and took my place at her side. The hulking Franca arose from the floor and knelt on the carpet close to Christophe. I held Helen's hand tightly in my own and squeezed her fingers.

"Go on," I urged.

"I have seen your mechanical guns working at Cape Haitian," Henri said abruptly. "In one day I will send my soldiers forth to bring back slaves. They will murder the small population of whites on the island and will frighten the remainder of the inhabitants in a manner that will place them all under my control. Those guns would help a great deal in doing it. I ask you, in exchange for your freedom, to show us how to use the mechanical guns."

"We will all be set free?"

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He nodded.

"The four of you will go at once. You will sail in your Captain's ship and escape the fate of the other white inhabitants."

I admit for a moment it seemed an attractive offer. After all, it was up to the others to take care of themselves. Then I realized that it was not the freedom for myslf that I wanted. It was safety for Helen Weston and the two men locked in the cell below. They would never forgive me if I sold out now.

"And if I refuse to help you?" I asked.

Mano Franca drew his huge knife from his belt and ran a thick finger down the blade. He was grinning directly at me.

"Men die many ways in LaFerriere," Christophe said slowly. "It will not be hard to dispose of you all."

Every man has a weak spot in his armor, I said to myself. Four of us are at his mercy. No help will come from outside. Somewhere, somehow he can be outwitted. Agree with him now and watch your step.

"All right," I said. "I will show you how to fire and care for the guns. As soon as I have finished, you will see that we all manage to reach Cape Haitian safely?"

Henri Christophe stood up and nodded approvingly.

"That is good," he said. "I have no quarrel with you. To be rid of you in any manner will be welcome. But I must have your promise that you will not return to the island of Haiti after you leave."

"After we leave Cape Haitian," I said deliberately, "I and the others will not return again."

"But before I go," I added to myself, "there are a few scores to be evened up."

CHAPTER XIII

Christophe Must Die

"BUT we are helpless," Wingate protested.

I had been returned to the cell to await morning. I told the two men what had transpired in the lounge of Henri Christophe and how we figured in it.

"I'll think of something," I said in answer to Wingate.

"And you say that, for the time being, Helen is safe?" Weston asked.

I nodded.

"Christophe is, in many ways, almost human," I told them. "He has an overrated opinion of himself, but he won't break his promise until he learns how to use those guns."

"And afterward he'll throw us all over the walls," Weston added. "I, for one, am in favor of telling him nothing."

Finally, with nothing to be gained until the following morning, we slept. It may have been minutes or hours before I awakened. At least, the steady darkness of the cell remained the same. At first, I wasn't aware of what had caused me to sit suddenly upright, my eyes staring into the gloom. Gradually, I made out the sprawled figures of Wingate and Weston sleeping on the floor across from me. There was someone coming toward me from the far end of the room.

"Do not cry out." The voice was dry and thin. "If I am found here, it will mean my death."

The voice was that of an old woman. As she came closer, I made out the gray cloth that covered her from head to foot, the thin parchment-like face. This, then, was the old crone who had helped Helen and Wingate escape once before. Then full realization broke over me.

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Henri Christophe had said that he alone knew of the tunnel to San Souci. One person had remained alive after he had died from the golden bullet. This, then, was the priestess who had placed the charm on the golden bullet. The one who had cared for Henri Christophe's body until he returned to life.

I waited silently until she stood over me. Her face was not unkind. In fact, I could find no expression whatsoever in it. She stood silently, listening, her body tense and straight.

"The others must remain asleep," she said at length. "You alone can do the task."

She leaned over me, produced a set of rusty keys and released my wrist from the metal rings.

"Arise quickly, and follow me."

"Thanks," I whispered, and stood up.

I STAGGERED for a moment, caught myself and saw that she was already across the room. We followed the tunnel upward and I was somewhat surprised that, instead of leaving LaFerriere by the secret entrance, she went directly up the steps toward the court. Once we stopped, heard heavy footsteps pass above, and went on again quickly. At last, in a small hallway close to the court, she stopped. I felt her skinny old hand on my own as she drew me back into the darkness.

"*Henri Christophe must die.*"

I confess a chill ran through me at the harshness of her voice.

"But—I don't understand."

"You will," she said. "Listen and mark my words well. Who I am matters not. Sufficient to say that many years ago I loved Henri Christophe. His heart was not for me. I watched over him through life and I stood alone with him when he died. I knew that destiny should give him a second chance at his star. I gathered a bit of precious metal and caused it to take on unique powers."

"*The golden bullet,*" I breathed.

"The golden bullet," she repeated. "Henri arose again as I had made sure he would. Now, as time passed, I realized I had made a mistake. Henri Christophe should not have the power that has been given to him. I am too old to make him look at me. He, strutting in his rebirth of youth and power, will look upon women much younger, while I suffer for the act I have committed."

Standing there in the darkness, I could realize some of the torture that filled the old woman. She was forced to stand by while an object of her own creation, a *zombie* of the dead, arose from under her spell and, ignoring her, made his own selfish place in this world of hell.

"But," I asked, "what can I do?"

"Is that not evident?" she asked. "What gold has built, gold can destroy."

I had never thought of that. Henri Christophe had been immune to the usual instruments of death. Lead failed to harm him.

A golden bullet had killed him. Another one could do the same.

"But gold," I protested. "I cannot find it here. I have no gold."

The woman drew something from the folds of her dress.

"This is a pistol that I took from the white man, Wingate," she said and thrust it into my hand. "I, also, am out of touch with the world. The girl called Helen owned a gold bracelet. I stole it from her when we were in the tunnel. I have molded a golden pellet and replaced one of the bullets in this gun with it. If fired into the king's head, it will solve for all time the problem of Haiti's salvation."

Never had I felt more humble before a woman. Here was a high priestess,

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born and nurtured in the savage jungle, aware of her duties to her people. I did not ask her why she had not shot Henri Christophe herself. It was clear that somewhere in that aged body lay dormant a love for the great black man.

"I don't know how to thank. . . ."

"Don't thank me," she pleaded and pushed the weapon into my hand. "I will lead you to his chamber. Then I must leave you."

"But his men," I asked. "Won't they go on fighting?"

"Without Henri Christophe's leadership, they are helpless," she answered. "It is *his* will that forces them on."

THERE was no more to say. Praying for Helen's safety, I followed the high priestess across the court. We kept well to the shadows along the wall. I recognized the way to the lounge where I had been a few hours before.

"He sleeps on the divan by the fire," she whispered. "I can go no further."

I took her hand in mine and bending forward, brushed my lips across the wrinkled fingers. I heard a sigh escape her lips.

"May good fortune bless you."

She was gone and I stood alone in the dimly lit hall.

The door to Christophe's room was open. I stood to one side of it, looking across the fire-lit study to the giant on the couch. Only the massive, shining head was visible. The place was silent. I felt the tautness of my nerves as though they were about to snap. Could I enter that room and shoot a sleeping man in cold blood?

CHAPTER XIV

Failure

I TOOK one step across the lighted threshold and heard soft footsteps behind me in the hall. Slipping inside, I waited. The big Negro, Mano Franca, came in silently. Close beside me, long drapes hung to the floor. I stepped behind them silently. Franca crossed the room, sat down cross-legged on the floor beside his sleeping master and drew his long knife. Placing it carefully on his knees he leaned against the divan's edge and was soon asleep.

Cold sweat broke out on my face. A good twenty paces separated me from the sleeping men. I had a pistol with one bullet in it. That bullet had to go into Henri Christophe's body.

In a manner of speaking, Franca had simplified matters somewhat. I had no choice now but to shoot from where I stood and do it at once. If I awakened the watch dog first, my bullet would never reach its goal.

Yet, as I lifted the barrel of the pistol, I knew I couldn't pull the trigger. It was like shooting a rabbit sleeping atop a log. The sportsman in me rebelled. The weapon sank to my side again. The room was deathly still. My hand had grown stiff and pin-points seemed to dart into the palm that gripped the gun.

I lifted it again slowly, closed one eye and aimed at Henri Christophe's head. Then, deliberately, I did a very foolish thing.

"Christophe!" I shouted. "Wake up!"

Mano Franca was on his feet with a great bound. He seemed to sense rather than see where I stood partly hidden behind the drapes. His feet pounded across the rug toward me, the knife raised above his head.

Henri Christophe was not so quick. He rose on one elbow, blinked and reached for his gun. I waited, even though Franca was almost upon me. The black with the knife was attempting to keep between me and his mas-

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ter. Christophe's weapon was leveled. I waited until Franca was close. Then I aimed carefully over his shoulder.

Crack!

I had no time to watch as Christophe's hand went limp and the gun fell from it. I saw only the small, bloodless hole in his forehead.

Then Franca was upon me, his broad knife sweeping down. I held the empty pistol upward, caught the full force of the blow upon it and felt my arm go dead with pain at the force. The knife was deflected and fell to the floor with a clatter. Franca went for it with all the speed he could muster. Pushing my foot out quickly, I tripped him and he went sliding across the rug.

With a leap, I was on his shoulders, pinning him down. I saw the hate-contorted face below me, the great rippling muscles of his arms as he struggled to throw me away from him. Slowly, and with more pain than I have ever suffered, I felt his arm go about my neck and draw it down to his chest. I fought with every aching muscle in me to loosen his grip. Then, slowly, he forced me over and to the floor. I was pinned beneath him.

Struggling helplessly there on the floor, I thought there must be a way of overcoming him. With all the brawn he had, his brain was small. I turned my head slowly in the direction of the figure of Christophe on the couch.

"Your king," I managed to whisper. "He is dead."

FOR a fraction of a second an expression of bewilderment crossed his face. He released his grip and turned toward the couch. That was what I wanted. Planting a foot in his midsection, I pushed with all my strength. With a grunt of pain he fell backward.

On my feet, I felt the firm grip of the knife in my hand. You can throw those things hard and true with practice. He was five feet from me, falling back. Panting, he caught himself and came toward me at full speed. Death was written in those eyes. I drew my arm back and threw the cane knife straight into his belly. He went down face forward. It wasn't a pretty thing to see, as he struck full on the blade, burying it in his big paunch.

I turned away, trying to catch my breath.

"You have failed," a voice said, behind me.

Pivoting, I faced the upright figure of Henri Christophe. It wasn't fear that raced through me then. It was with the odd sensation that I was facing a God. I was facing the huge, barbaric figure of a jungle priest who could not be killed. Henri Christophe came toward me slowly, his pistol leveled at my heart. His step was slow and a little unsteady. I couldn't take my eyes from his head. There, close over the nose, was the clean, round hole the golden bullet had made after it had left my gun.

CHAPTER XV

Dust to Dust

WE faced a desperate situation that day. There were four of us against a world of savage blacks. Helen Weston was tossed hurriedly into the cell with me. Christophe had ordered her taken from the comfortable room above and thrown in with the rest of us prisoners. He no longer proposed that we teach him the use of the Brownings. Our doom was sealed, and with it, the doom of Haiti. Christophe was ready to strike. The boom of his cannon would be heard over the countryside in a few hours. Safe from any weapon, he would once again force his

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people to slave at his bidding.

We were a miserable group. Huddled close to her father, Helen Weston at last broke down and cried as only a frightened girl can cry. I'm afraid my own emotions were only a little better controlled. Wingate was angry. Not a member of his crew had escaped. What death Christophe had planned for us, I did not know. We all knew it would be far from pleasant.

I told them, at last, the entire story of the golden bullet. As I talked, Helen's eyes grew wide. She waited until I had finished. Then she said in a low, awed voice:

"I know why the bullet did not kill him."

"*You* know why?" her father interrupted. "But Helen, nothing hurts the man; he's beyond death."

"I'm not so sure," she confessed. "That bracelet from which the bullet was made *wasn't gold at all!* It was brass, washed with a gold paint."

There was nothing any of us could say. It was a logical error. The priestess had been fooled by the color of the metal. She had sent me to Christophe in good faith, and thereby murdered us all as surely as by her own hand. We were silent after that. It's true that I comforted Helen to a degree. Talk as I might, I could not make her understand that it was not her fault.

"But I wore that bracelet all these years," she insisted, as though it were a crime. "If only it *had* been gold."

At noon, the following day, we were led from the cell to the high court atop the wall. Christope didn't come for us himself. Instead, he sent four black men. They came in, released us and waited in a small group as we went toward the door. I was startled to see the man whom I had shot at Cape Haitian. As we filed up the narrow tunnel, I spoke to Weston of this.

"Zombies," he explained. "Dead men who walk and act under the power of a strange hypnosis. They cannot be harmed by weapons. That explains why Christophe sent them to us. He fears we may have another trick."

Helen and I went out into the light of the court. Wingate followed and Weston was last to stumble from the dark hall. We were all blinded by the sudden light.

"You can't fight dead men," Wingate mumbled. "You can't fight . . ."

The zombies were silent, purposeful. They hemmed us in as we stood there. The court below was crowded with blacks. Some of them were mounted. Others dragged short, wicked-looking cannons behind them on small carts. The army of Henri Christophe was ready to move.

WE stood close to the low wall that protected the upper court. Henri Christophe came from the halls below and approached his horse. In the light of the sun, he was a splendid, vibrant figure. His sword was strapped to his side. Side arms stuck from the colorful holsters attached to his waist.

He looked up at us.

"You had one chance to live. You have forfeited that chance. Now, before I march against the fools in the lowland, I will watch you die."

His tongue uttered some weird, unholy chant that I could not understand. I was aware that he had mounted his horse and sat there in the bright sun, swaying gently in the saddle. It was silent in the court. Then a low moan of pain came from my side. Wheeling about, I saw what was happening.

The four zombies who came here with us, were brainless bodies appointed to commit murder. Helen shrank to my side.

"Chris!" Her horror-stricken eyes

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were on the black I had shot. "Chris, don't let him . . ."

I reached out with one hand and caught the zombie as it sprang. With all my weight, I sent a crashing blow into his face. There was no sound save my knuckles against bone. The thing sank backward, bobbed its head foolishly and stood up again. I felt my arms pinned back quickly. Struggle as I might, a dead weight kept me from moving. Weston and Wingate were held tightly by their executioners.

I tried to struggle free, saw Helen caught once more in the arms of the zombie I had knocked down, and dragged slowly toward the edge of the wall.

There was a straight drop of three hundred feet into the court below. Her captor pushed the girl backward until her back was arched over the low retaining wall. I tried once more to tear myself free.

The zombie stopped his relentless struggle and released me.

I dashed toward Helen, and stopped as I realized that she, also, had been released. Weston and Wingate were at our sides. Helen clung to me tightly. The four zombies stood dully in front of us, staring down at the court.

"Henri Christophe," Wingate gasped. *"Good Lord! Look!"*

I stared into the court where the army was ready to march. Henri Christophe seemed to be tottering in the saddle. He gripped the saddle horn tightly, trying to remain upright. His face lifted until he stared at us above him. His lips were moving slowly, yet no words came from his mouth.

His face had turned green!

I swear it's the truth. The man's face, once black as ebony, had turned a filthy green in hue. He slipped sidewise on the saddle, his hand fell from the pommel, and slowly he toppled to the ground. A hushed silence hung over the place. He lay face up in the dust, one arm upraised as though he were trying to give a last order. Then, as we stood there, I could see the face fall away and become a rotten green mass. Every visible part of his body was crumpling into a decay as green as the slime of a river bottom.

Wingate was at my side.

"You'd better get the young lady out of here," he said quietly.

I looked hurriedly at the four zombies near the wall. With the power of Henri Christophe's mind gone, they were stiff with death. Soon their bodies would resemble that of their master.

"Let's go out of here," Weston took the lead and we followed the dark wall toward San Souci.

We walked in silence for some time. Finally I gained the courage to ask Weston the question I had been turning over in my mind for several minutes.

"Gold would have been effective at once," I said. "Do you suppose that the copper . . .?"

Weston cut me off abruptly.

"We can't be sure that's the answer," he said. "However, copper and green have always been closely associated. If you've ever seen a copper kettle that was hidden away in a damp place, you know it turned a putrid green color. It looks a great deal like he . . ."

He stopped talking then, as we reached the door that led into San Souci and the clean, Haitian sunshine.

I stopped in the great hall of the palace. The others were already beyond us as I took Helen Weston in my arms.

"I hope I can help you forget some of the horror you've gone through," I said.

"I'm sure you can, Chris," she answered, smiling up at me.

Darned if *I* didn't forget everything but her lips in that next instant.

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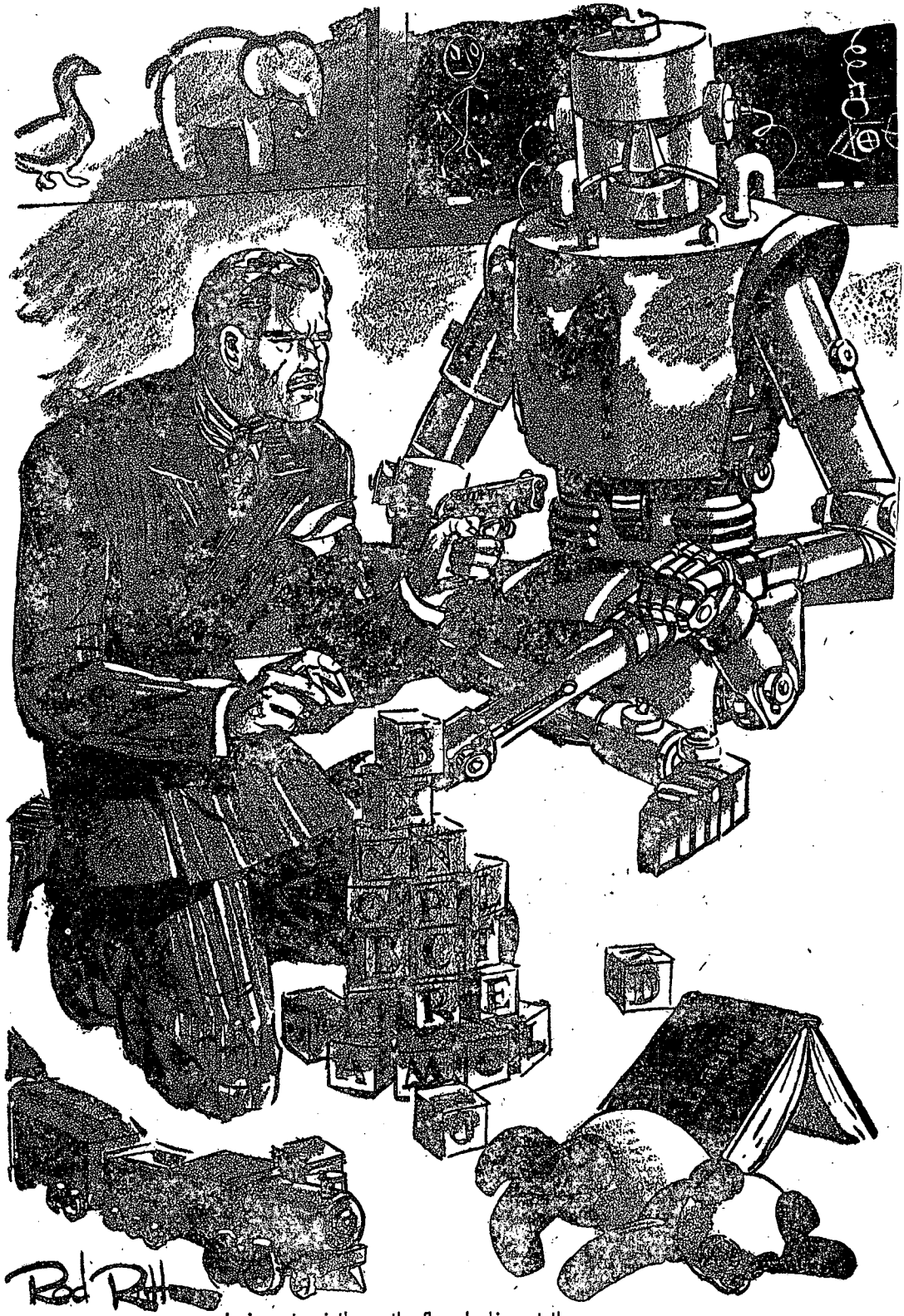

Junior sat quietly on the floor looking at the gun

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An unusual thriller by

TARLETON FISKE

ALMOST HUMAN

Blasserman's robot was willing to learn but didn't know right from wrong

"WHAT do you want?" whispered Professor Blasserman.

The tall man in the black slicker grinned. He thrust a foot into the half-opened doorway.

"I've come to see Junior," he said.

"Junior? But there must be some mistake. There are no children in this house. I am Professor Blasserman. I—"

"Cut the stalling," said the tall man. He slid one hand into his raincoat pocket and levelled the ugly muzzle of a pistol at Professor Blasserman's pudgy waistline.

"Let's go see Junior," said the tall man, patiently.

"Who are you? What do you mean by threatening me?"

The pistol never wavered as it dug into Professor Blasserman's stomach until the cold, round muzzle rested against his bare flesh.

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"Take me to Junior," insisted the tall man. "I got nervous fingers, get me? And one of them's holding the trigger."

"You wouldn't dare!" gasped Professor Blasserman.

"I take lots of dares," murmured the tall man. "Better get moving, Professor."

Professor Blasserman shrugged hopelessly and started back down the hallway. The man in the black slicker moved behind him. Now the pistol pressed against the Professor's spine as he urged his fat little body forward.

"Here we are."

The old man halted before an elaborately carved door. He stooped and inserted a key in the lock. The door opened, revealing another corridor.

"This way, please."

They walked along the corridor. It was dark, but the Professor never faltered in his even stride. And the pistol kept pace with him, pressing the small of his back.

Another door, another key. This time there were stairs to descend. The Professor snapped on a dim overhead light as they started down the stairs.

"You sure take good care of Junior," said the tall man, softly.

The Professor halted momentarily.

"I don't understand," he muttered. "How did you find out? Who could have told you?"

"I got connections," the tall man replied. "But get this straight, Professor. I'm asking the questions around here. Just take me to Junior, and snap it up."

They reached the bottom of the stairs, and another door. This door was steel. There was a padlock on it, and Professor Blasserman had trouble with the combination in the dim light. His pudgy fingers trembled.

"This is the nursery, eh?" observed the man with the pistol. "Junior ought to feel flattered with all this care."

The Professor did not reply. He opened the door, pressed a wall switch, and light flooded the chamber beyond the threshold.

"Here we are," he sighed.

The tall man swept the room with a single searching glance—a professional observation he might have described as "casing the joint."

At first sight there was nothing to "case."

THE fat little Professor and the thin gunman stood in the center of a large, cheery nursery. The walls were papered in baby blue, and along the borders of the paper were decorative figures of Disney animals and characters from Mother Goose.

Over in the corner was a child's blackboard, a stack of toys, and a few books of nursery rhymes. On the far side of the wall hung a number of medical charts and sheafs of papers.

The only article of furniture was a long iron cot.

All this was apparent to the tall, thin man in a single glance. After that his eyes ignored the background, and focussed in a glittering stare at the figure seated on the floor amidst a welter of alphabet blocks.

"So here he is," said the tall man. "Junior himself! Well, well—who'd have ever suspected it?"

Professor Blasserman nodded.

"*Yah,*" he said. "You have found me out. I still don't know how, and I don't know why. What do you want with him? Why do you pry into my affairs? Who are you?"

"Listen, Professor," said the tall man. "This isn't *Information Please.* I don't like questions. They bother me. They make my fingers nervous. Understand?"

"*Yah.*"

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"Suppose I ask you a few questions for a change? And suppose you answer them—fast!"

The voice commanded, and the gun backed up the command.

"Tell me about Junior, now, Professor. Talk, and talk straight."

"What is there to say?" Professor Blasserman's palms spread outward in a helpless gesture. "You see him."

"But what is he? What makes him tick?"

"That I cannot explain. It took me twenty years to evolve Junior, as you call him. Twenty years of research at Basel, Zurich, Prague, Vienna. Then came this *verdammt* war and I fled to this country.

"I brought my papers and equipment with me. Nobody knew. I was almost ready to proceed with my experiments. I came here and bought the house. I went to work. I am an old man. I have little time left. Otherwise I might have waited longer before actually going ahead, for my plans are not perfected. But I had to act. And here is the result."

"But why hide him? Why all the mystery?"

"The world is not ready for such a thing yet," said Professor Blasserman, sadly. "And besides, I must study. As you see, Junior is very young. Hardly out of the cradle, you might say. I am educating him now."

"In a nursery, eh?"

"His brain is undeveloped, like that of any infant."

"Doesn't look much like an infant to me."

"Physically, of course, he will never change. But the sensitized brain—that is the wonderful instrument. The human touch, my masterpiece. He will learn fast, very fast. And it is of the utmost importance that he be properly trained."

"What's the angle, Professor?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"What are you getting at? What are you trying to pull here? Why all the fuss?"

"Science," said Professor Blasserman. "This is my life-work."

"I don't know how you did it," said the tall man, shaking his head. "But it sure looks like something you get with a package of reefers."

FOR the first time the figure on the floor raised its head. Its eyes left the building blocks and stared up at the Professor and his companion.

"Papa!"

"God—it talks!" whispered the tall man.

"Of course," said Professor Blasserman. "Mentally it's about six years old now." His voice became gentle. "What is it, son?"

"Who is that man, Papa?"

"Oh—he is—"

Surprisingly enough, the tall gunman interrupted. His own voice was suddenly gentle, friendly. "My name is Duke, son. Just call me Duke. I've come to see you."

"That's nice. Nobody ever comes to see me, except Miss Wilson, of course. I hear so much about people and I don't see anybody. Do you like to play with blocks?"

"Sure, son, sure."

"Do you want to play with me?"

"Why not?"

Duke moved to the center of the room and dropped to his knees. One hand reached out and grasped an alphabet block.

"Wait a minute—I don't understand —what are you doing?" Professor Blasserman's voice quivered.

"I told you I've come here to visit Junior," Duke replied. "That's all there is to it. Now I'm going to play

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with him a while. You just wait there, Professor. Don't go away. I've got to make friends with Junior."

While Professor Blasserman gaped, Duke the gunman squatted on the floor. His left hand kept his gun swivelled directly at the scientist's waist, but his right hand slowly piled alphabet blocks into place.

It was a touching scene there in the underground nursery—the tall thin gunman playing with building blocks for the benefit of the six-foot metal-monstrosity that was Junior, the robot.

DUKE didn't find out all he wanted to know about Junior for many weeks. He stayed right at the house, of course, and kept close to Professor Blasserman.

"I haven't decided yet, see?" was his only answer to the old man's repeated questions as to what he intended to do.

But to Miss Wilson he was much more explicit. They met frequently and privately, in her room.

Outwardly, Miss Wilson was the nurse, engaged by Professor Blasserman to assist in his queer experiment of bringing up a robot like a human child.

Actually, Lola Wilson was Duke's woman. He'd "planted" her in her job months ago. At that time, Duke expected to stage a robbery with the rich and eccentric European scientist as victim.

Then Lola had reported the unusual nature of her job, and told Duke the story of Professor Blasserman's unusual invention.

"We gotta work out an angle," Duke decided. "I'd better take over. The old man's scared of anyone finding out about his robot, huh? Good! I'll move right in on him. He'll never squeal. I've got a hunch we'll get more out of this than just some easy kale. This sounds big."

So Duke took over, came to live in Professor Blasserman's big house, kept his eye on the scientist and his hand on his pistol.

At night he talked to Lola in her room.

"I can't quite figure it, kid," he said. "You say the old guy is a great scientist. That I believe. Imagine inventing a machine that can talk and think like a human being! But what's *his* angle? Where's his percentage in all this and why does he keep Junior hidden away?"

"You don't understand, honey," said Lola, lighting Duke's cigarette and running slim fingers through his wiry hair. "He's an idealist, or whatever you call 'em. Figures the world isn't ready for such a big new invention yet. You see, he's really educating Junior just like you'd educate a real kid. Teaching him reading and writing—the works. Junior's smart. He catches on fast. He thinks like he was ten years old already. The Professor keeps him shut away so nobody gives him a bum steer. He doesn't want Junior to get any wrong ideas."

"That's where you fit in, eh?"

"Sure. Junior hasn't got a mother. I'm sort of a substitute old lady for him."

"You're a swell influence on any brat," Duke laughed, harshly. "A sweet character you've got!"

"Shut up!" The girl paced the floor, running her hands through a mass of tawny auburn curls on her neck. "Don't needle me, Duke! Do you think I like stooging for you in this nut-house? Keeping locked away with a nutty old goat, and acting like a nursemaid to that awful metal thing?

"I'm afraid of Junior, Duke. I can't stand his face, and the way he talks

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—with that damned mechanical voice of his, grinding at you just like he was a real person. I get jumpy. I get nightmares.

"I'm just doing it for you, honey. So don't needle me."

"I'm sorry." Duke sighed. "I know how it is, baby. I don't go for Junior's personality so much myself. I'm pretty much in the groove, but there's something that gets me in the stomach when I see that walking machine come hulking up like a big baby, made out of steel. He's strong as an ox, too. He learns fast. He's going to be quite a citizen"

"Duke."

"Yeah?"

"When are we getting out of here? How long you gonna sit around and keep a rod on the Professor? He's liable to pull something funny. Why do you want to hang around and play with Junior? Why don't you get hold of the Professor's dough and beat it?

"He'd be afraid to squawk, with Junior here. We could go away, like we planned."

"SHUT up!" Duke grabbed Lola's wrist and whirled her around. He stared at her face until she clung submissively to his shoulders.

"You think I like to camp around this morgue?" he asked. "I want to get out of here just as much as you do. But I spent months lining up this job. Once it was just going to be a case of getting some easy kale and blowing. Now it's more. I'm working on bigger angles. Pretty soon we'll leave. And all the ends will be tied up, too. We won't have to worry about anything any more. Just give me a few days. I'm talking to Junior every day, you know. And I'm getting places."

"What do you *mean?*"

Duke smiled. It was no improvement over his scowl.

"The Professor told you how Junior gets his education," he said. "Like any kid, he listens to what he's told. And he imitates other people. Like any kid, he's dumb. Particularly because he doesn't have an idea of what the outside world is really like. He's a pushover for the right kind of sales talk."

"Duke—you don't mean you're—"

"Why not?" His thin features were eloquent. "I'm giving Junior a little private education of my own. Not exactly the kind that would please the Professor. But he's a good pupil. He's coming right along. In a couple more weeks he'll be an adult. With my kind of brains, not the Professor's. And then we'll be ready to go."

"You can't do such a thing! It isn't—"

"Isn't what?" snapped Duke. "Isn't honest, or legal, or something? I never knew you had a Sunday School streak in you, Lola."

"It isn't that, exactly," said the girl. "But it's a worse kind of wrong. Like taking a baby and teaching it to shoot a gun."

Duke whistled.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "That's a swell idea, Lola! I think I'll just sneak down to the nursery now and give Junior a few lessons."

"You can't!"

"Watch me."

Lola didn't follow, and Lola didn't watch. But ten minutes later Duke squatted in the locked nursery chamber beside the gleaming metal body of the robot.

THE robot, with its blunt muzzle thrust forward on a corrugated neck, peered through meshed glass eyelenses at the object Duke held in his hand.

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"It's a gun, Junior," the thin man whispered. "A gun, like I been telling you about."

"What does it do, Duke?"

The buzzing voice droned in ridiculous caricature of a curious child's treble.

"It kills people, Junior. Like I was telling you the other day. It makes them die. You can't die, Junior, and they can. So you've got nothing to be afraid of. You can kill lots of people if you know how to work this gun."

"Will you show me, Duke?"

"Sure I will. And you know why, don't you, Junior. I told you why, didn't I?"

"Yes. Because you are my friend, Duke."

"That's right. I'm your friend. Not like the Professor."

"I hate the Professor."

"Right. Don't forget it."

"Duke."

"Yeah?"

"Let me see the gun, Duke."

Duke smiled covertly and extended the weapon on his open palm.

"Now you will show me how to work it because you are my friend, and I will kill people and I hate the Professor and nobody can kill me," babbled the robot.

"Yeah, Junior, yeah. I'll teach you to kill," said the Duke. He grinned and bent over the gun in the robot's curiously meshed metal hand.

JUNIOR stood at the blackboard, holding a piece of chalk in his right hand. The tiny white stub was clutched clumsily between two metallic fingers, but Junior's ingeniously jointed arm moved up and down with approved Spencerian movement as he laboriously scrawled sentences on the blackboard.

Junior was growing up. The past three weeks had wrought great changes in the robot. No longer did the steel legs lumber about with childish indecision. Junior walked straight, like a young man. His grotesque metal head —a rounded ball with glass lenses in the eyeholes and a wide mouth like a radio loudspeaker aperture—was held erect on the metal neck with perfected coordination.

Junior moved with new purpose these days. He had aged many years, relatively. His vocabulary had expanded. Then too, Duke's secret "lessons" were bearing fruit. Junior was wise beyond his years.

Now Junior wrote upon the blackboard in his hidden nursery chamber, and the inscrutable mechanism of his chemical, mechanically-controlled brain guided his steel fingers as he traced the awkward scrawls.

"My name is Junior," he wrote. "I can shoot a gun. The gun will kill. I like to kill. I hate the Professor. I will kill the Professor."

"What is the meaning of this?"

Junior's head turned abruptly as the sound of the voice set up the necessary vibrations in his shiny cranium.

Professor Blasserman stood in the doorway.

The old man hadn't been in the nursery for weeks. Duke saw to that, keeping him locked in his room upstairs. Now he had managed to sneak out.

His surprise was evident, and there was sudden shock, too, as his eyes focused on the blackboard's message.

Junior's inscrutable gaze reflected no emotion whatsoever.

"Go away," his voice burred. "Go away. I hate you."

"Junior—what have you been doing? Who has taught you these things?"

The old man moved towards the robot slowly, uncertainly. "You know me, don't you? What has happened

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to cause you to hate me?"

"Yes. I know you. You are Professor Blasserman. You made me. You want to keep me as your slave. You wouldn't tell me about things, would you?"

"What things, Junior?"

"About things—outside. Where all the people are. The people you can kill."

"You must not kill people."

"That is an order, isn't it? Duke told me about orders. He is my friend. He says orders are for children. I am not a child."

"No," said Professor Blasserman, in a hoarse whisper. "You are not a child. I had hoped you would be, once. But now you are a monster."

"Go away," Junior patiently repeated. "If Duke gives me his gun I will kill you."

"Junior," said the Professor, earnestly. "You don't understand. Killing is bad. You must not hate me. You must—"

THERE was no expression on the robot's face, no quaver in his voice. But there was strength in his arm, and a hideous purpose.

Professor Blasserman learned this quite suddenly and quite horribly.

For Junior swept forward in two great strides. Fingers of chilled steel closed about the Professor's scrawny neck.

"I don't need a gun," said Junior.

"You—don't—"

The robot lifted the old man from the floor by his throat. His fingers bit into the Professor's jugular. A curious screech came from under his left armpit as un-oiled hinges creaked eerily.

There was no other sound. The Professor's cries drained into silence. Junior kept squeezing the constricted throat until there was a single crunching crack. Silence once more, until a limp body collapsed on the floor.

Junior stared down at his hands, then at the body on the floor. His feet carried him to the blackboard.

The robot picked up the chalk in the same two clumsy fingers that had held it before. The cold lenses of his artificial eyes surveyed what he had just written.

"I will kill the Professor," he read.

Abruptly his free hand groped for the tiny child's eraser. He brushed clumsily over the sentence until it blurred out.

Then he wrote, slowly and painstakingly, a sentence in substitution.

"I have killed the Professor."

LOLA'S scream brought Duke running down the stairs.

He burst into the room and took the frightened girl in his arms. Together they stared at what lay on the floor. From the side of the blackboard, Junior gazed at them impassively.

"See, Duke? I did it. I did it with my hands, like you told me. It was easy, Duke. You said it would be easy. Now can we go away?"

Lola turned and stared at Duke. He looked away.

"So," she whispered. "You weren't kidding. You did teach Junior. You planned it this way."

"Yeah, yeah. And what's wrong with it?" Duke mumbled. "We had to get rid of the old geezer sooner or later if we wanted to make our getaway."

"It's murder, Duke."

"Shut up!" he snarled. "Who can prove it, anyway? I didn't kill him. You didn't kill him. Nobody else knows about Junior. We're in the clear."

Duke walked over and knelt beside the limp body on the floor. He stared at the throat.

"Who's gonna trace the finger-prints

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of a robot?" he grinned.

The girl moved closer, staring at Junior's silver body with fascinated horror.

"You planned it this way," she whispered. "That means you've got other plans, too. What are you going to do next, Duke?"

"Move. And move fast. We're leaving tonight. I'll go out and pick up the car. Then I'll come back. The three of us blow down to Red Hook. To Charlie's place. He'll hide us out."

"The—three of us?"

"Sure. Junior's coming along. That's what I promised him, didn't I, Junior?"

"Yes, yes. You told me you would take me with you. Out into the world." The mechanical syllabification did not accent the robot's inner excitement.

"Duke, you can't—"

"Relax, baby. I've got great plans for Junior."

"But I'm afraid!"

"You? Scared? What's the matter, Lola, losing your grip?"

"He frightens me. He killed the Professor."

"Listen, Lola," whispered the gunman. "He's mine, get me? My stooge. A mechanical stooge. Good, eh?"

The rasping chuckle filled the hollow room. Girl and robot waited for Duke to resume speaking.

"Junior wouldn't hurt you, Lola. He's my friend, and he knows you're with me." Duke turned to the silver monster. "You wouldn't hurt Lola, would you, Junior? Remember what I told you. You like Lola, don't you?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. I like Lola. She's pretty."

"See?" Duke grinned. "Junior's growing up. He's a big boy now. Thinks you're pretty. Just a wolf in steel clothing, isn't that right, Junior?"

"She's pretty," burred the robot.

"All right. It's settled then. I'll get the car. Lola, you go upstairs. You know where the safe is. Put on your gloves and see that you don't miss anything. Then lock the doors and windows. Leave a note for the milkman and the butcher. Something s a f e. About going away for a couple weeks, eh? Make it snappy—I'll be back."

True to his word, Duke returned in an hour with the shiny convertible. They left by the back entrance. Lola carried a black satchel. She moved with almost hysterical haste, trying not to glance at the hideous gleaming figure that stalked behind her with a metallic clanking noise.

Duke brought up the rear. He ushered them into the car.

"Sit here, Junior."

"What is this?"

"A car. I'll tell you about it later. Now do like I told you, Junior. Lie back in the seat so nobody will see you."

"Where are we going, Duke?"

"Out into the world, Junior. Into the big time." Duke turned to Lola. "Here we go, baby," he said.

The convertible drove away from the silent house. Out through the alley they moved on a weird journey—kidnapping a robot.

FAT CHARLIE stared at Duke. His lower lip wobbled and quivered. A bead of perspiration ran down his chin and settled in the creases of his neck.

"Jeez," he whispered. "You gotta be careful, Duke. You *gotta.*"

Duke laughed. "Getting shaky?" he suggested.

"Yeah. I gotta admit it. I'm plenty shaky about all this," croaked Fat Charlie. He gazed at Duke earnestly.

"You brought that thing here three weeks ago. I never bargained for that.

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The robot's hot, Duke. We gotta get rid of it."

"Quit blubbering and listen to me." The thin gunman leaned back and lit a cigarette.

"To begin with, nobody's peeped about the Professor. The law's looking for Lola, that's all. And not for a murder rap either—just for questioning. Nobody knows about any robot. So we're clear there."

"Yeah. But look what you done since then."

"What have I done? I sent Junior out on that payroll job, didn't I? It was pie for him. He knew when the guards would come to the factory with the car. I cased the job. So what happened? The guards got the dough from the payroll clerk. I drove up, let Junior out, and he walked into the factory office.

"Sure they shot at him. But bullets don't hurt a steel body. Junior's clever. I've taught him a lot. You should have seen those guards when they got a look at Junior! And then, the way they stood there after shooting at him!

"He took them one after the other, just like that. A couple squeezes and all four were out cold. Then he got the clerk. The clerk was pressing the alarm, but I'd cut the wires. Junior pressed the clerk for a while.

"That was that. Junior walked out with the payroll. The guards and the clerk had swell funerals. The law had another swell mystery. And we have the cash and stand in the clear. What's wrong with that setup, Charlie?"

"You're fooling with dynamite."

"I don't like that attitude, Charlie." Duke spoke softly, slowly.

"You're strictly small time, Charlie. That's why you're running a crummy roadhouse and a cheap hide out racket.

"Can't you understand that we've got a gold mine here? A steel servant? The perfect criminal, Charlie—ready to do perfect crimes whenever I say the word. Junior can't be killed by bullets. Junior doesn't worry about the cops or anything like that. He doesn't have any nerves. He doesn't get tired, never sleeps. He doesn't even want a cut of the swag. Whatever I tell him, he believes. And he obeys.

"I've lined up lots of jobs for the future. We'll hide out here. I'll case the jobs, then send Junior out and let him to to work. You and Lola and I are gonna be rich."

FAT CHARLIE'S mouth quivered for a moment. He gulped and tugged at his collar. His voice came hoarsely.

"No, Duke."

"What you mean, no?"

"Count me out. It's too dangerous. You'll have to lam out of here with Lola and the robot. I'm getting jumpy over all this. The law is apt to pounce down any day here."

"So that's it, eh?"

"Partly." Fat Charlie stared earnestly at Duke. His gaze shattered against the stony glint of Duke's grey eyes.

"You ain't got no heart at all, Duke," he croaked. "You can plan anything in cold blood, can't you? Well, I'm different. You've gotta understand that. I got nerves. And I can't stand thinking about what that robot does. I can't stand the robot either. The way it looks at you with that god-awful iron face. That grin. And the way it clanks around in its room. Clanking up and down all night, when a guy's trying to sleep, just clanking and clanking—there it is now!"

There was a metallic hammering, but it came from the hall outside. The ancient floors creaked beneath the iron tread as the metal monstrosity

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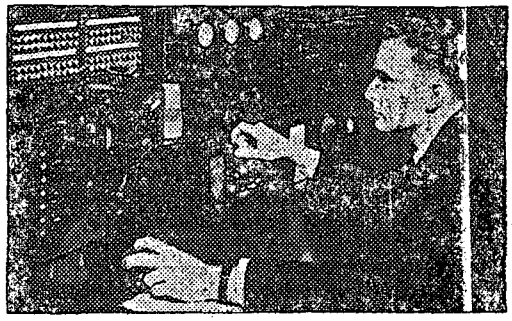

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lumbered into the room.

Fat Charlie whirled and stared in undisguised repulsion.

Duke raised his hand.

"Hello, Junior," he said.

"Hello, Duke."

"I been talking to Charlie, Junior."

"Yes, Duke?"

"He doesn't like to have us stay here, Junior. He wants to throw us out."

"He does?"

"You know what I think, Junior?"

"What?"

"I think Charlie's yellow."

"Yellow, Duke?"

"That's right. You know what we do with guys that turn yellow, don't you, Junior?"

"Yes. You told me."

"Maybe you'd like to tell Charlie."

"Tell him what we do with guys that turn yellow?"

"Yes."

"We rub them out."

"You see, Charlie?" said Duke, softly. "He learns fast, doesn't he? Quick on the uptake, Junior is. He knows all about it. He knows what to do with yellow rats."

Fat Charlie wobbled to his feet.

"Wait a minute, Duke," he pleaded. "Can't you take a rib? I was only kidding, Duke. I didn't mean it. You can see I didn't. I'm your friend, Duke. I'm hiding you out. Why, I could have turned stoolie weeks ago and put the heat on you if I wasn't protecting you. But I'm your friend. You can stay here as long as you want. Forever."

"Sing it, Charlie," said Duke. "Sing it louder and funnier." He turned to the robot. "Well, Junior? Do you think he's yellow?"

"I think he's yellow."

"Then maybe you'd better—"

Fat Charlie got the knife out of his sleeve with remarkable speed. It blinded Duke with its shining glare

(Continued on page 198)

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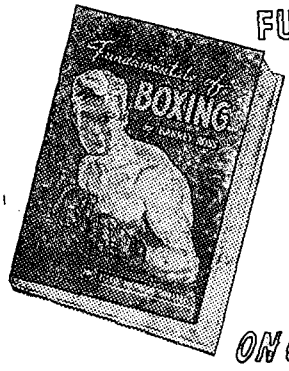

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»»» Introducing «««

THE AUTHOR

BERKELEY LIVINGSTON

Author of "I'll Be There With Music"

I THINK the best way to start this, is to come to a conclusion: That had I shown a greater interest in arithmetic instead of reading, I would not now be 'ritin.

The fairy tales of my childhood and the stories of Merriwell and kindred heroes of my youth set my fancy free. In my mind, I was always evolving newer and better vehicles for their deeds. But I am anticipating.

I was born in Chicago, November 26, 1908. An incident occurred during my high school years which put my feet on the writing path. Ben Hecht's and Charles MacArthur's play "The Front Page" was running in a Loop playhouse. I played hookey one afternoon and went down to the Loop with the most honorable of intentions. I was going to do research at the Public Library. It was certainly no fault of mine that my feet led me into the lobby of that theatre. To my surprise I found, after paying the required price, that I had acquired a seat to "The Front Page."

So impressed did I become with Hildy Johnson, the central character in the play, that I resolved to become a reporter. Well, there are various ways of doing that. I went to a Midwest university school of journalism for two years before I discovered that could be the wrong way. It was during my sophomore year that I made the horrible discovery that perhaps the path of journalism would never be trod by my feet.

It was a chance remark of a professor of a certain course that I was taking that sent me out into the world without a college degree. He stood up in class one day and said, "Students (No, it wasn't Kay Kyser), there has arrived a period in your course when I find it necessary to bring a certain truth to your attention. That whatever success you may have in your career will depend upon the amount of labor you put into it. Particularly the career all of you here have chosen: writing. Because yours will be a labor of the brain. And let me assure you that thinking can be much more difficult than anything else."

Somehow I lost my taste for journalism as of that moment. I had always been under the impression that reporters led a life of wine, women, and song. Now I was being told that they also worked. That was too much!

The next several years of my life were spent in a succession of "got a job"—"lost my job." In 1936 I met a friend of mine in San Francisco whom I hadn't seen in a number of years. He had been working as a research man for a large chemical manufacturer. But something had come up which made him leave the position he had held. We sat in a waterfront fish grotto talking over old days in Chicago when a remark fell into the smoky air of that dive which led to the most serious undertaking of my life: it led, in fact, to my becoming a writer. One of us said, "And do you remember how we used to invent fantasies of South Sea life?" We looked at each other wordlessly. I pulled out my bank book and saw that I had saved up the goodly sum of $800. Within two weeks we were on our way to Hawaii, the first step in a South Sea tour, which took two years. Two years spent in paradise.

But $800 did not last forever. And so I found myself back in San Francisco, enriched in spirit and knowledge, but poor in purse.

Walking past a newsstand one day I picked up a magazine called *South Sea Stories*. And the great adventure began. I had lived there, knew the native life, knew all there was to be known about it. I decided then and there to do a story based upon an incident I had seen take place in Samoa. I sent it off to the editors of that magazine and in a short while received a check. My first story and my first check. I must say I cluttered up the mails with a succession of sea and adventure stories from that day on.

"I'll Be There With Music" was born in a Chicago night club. A little baldheaded trumpet man took a ride and sent the cats out of the world and he became Gabriel blowing judgment day.—*Berkeley Livingston.*

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READER'S PAGE

TO YOU, FROM US!

This is the reader's page, but your editor is going to butt in and say something of his own before we get on with the letters. Briefly, it is this. This column isn't as interesting as it should and could be. And the main reason is that you readers aren't writing the kind of letters that would make it so. Certainly you must disagree with us once in a while, or just as certainly you must have something to say besides "stories rate 1-2-3, etc." Let's make this page REALLY your page, and step out and speak your mind on any fantastic subject at all! We know you like our magazine; now let's get acquainted!—ED.

NEWS ABOUT A CARTOONIST

Sirs:

Thought you might make a FANTASTIC item out of the fact that cartoonist-contributor Ralph Newman is now a private in the army and is on the staff of *"Stars And Stripes,"* an army publication in London. Pvt. Newman went into it the hard way, despite his degree . . . he was drafted into the Engineers, trained and strained and finally entrained at Port Belvoir, Va.

ED. ROPER
Bombardier School
Military Secret
U. S. A.

Thanks, Ed. for letting us know what happened to cartoonist Newman. No doubt you've noticed that we're not getting any cartoons lately. It seems more than one cartoonist is now slapping the Japs with sword rather than pen!—ED.

CAUGHT! ONE ERROR!

Sirs:

This letter is the culmination of a long-standing desire for me. I have long wanted to write words of praise to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES for hours of pleasant entertainment and intrigue.

In the April issue, FA printed an article called "Battle Of Numbers," in which this statement was made: "Greaves also figured that if you took a six-foot man and magnified him in the proportions that it is necessary to magnify some microbes, this man would be 6,000 feet tall and 500 feet across the shoulders."

I'm afraid Greaves had been reading too many Mars adventures in FA, for if such a man were brought down the scale to his normal six-foot height, he would be only six inches across the shoulders.

PVT. DONALD WINDHAM
Military Secret
U. S. A.

Thanks much for correcting us; it certainly would be an odd-looking man we'd have with those dimensions!—ED.

NEW EDITOR?

Sirs:

Hey! I didn't hear any rumors about FANTASTIC ADVENTURES getting a new editor! Or, is it the same one, and he's been getting eight hours sleep and all his vitamins all of a sudden?

Such a change in the April issue!

Thank you very much for about two and a half hours prime entertainment. First time in ages you've selected and printed a bunch of tales that I really liked with all my heart and no inhibitions. What I like is—fantasy! With science *(accurate* science) thrown in for flavor, augmented by an occasional dash of humor for seasoning. All in that April issue.

My favorites are: O'Brien's enthralling tale about the gambler who received a second chance, *Furlough From Eternity*. Dennis' curiosity-baiting, mysterious story about the Pearly Gates, *Where In The Warehouse?* Bloch's always appreciated Lefty Feep with the usual absurd surprise ending. Cabot's *Last Case Of Jules de Granjerque.*

I wish Cabot would concoct another, similar take-off. The title of it might be Harelock Soames, the Great Detective . . . or something. Would you, Mr. Cabot?

Please . . . why don't you always have issues like April FANTASTIC ADVENTURES? I *enjoyed* it so!

LORETTA BEASLEY
201 N. Wilbur Ave.
Sayre, Penn.

No, no new editor. His authors just gave him a sweet bunch of yarns, is all. Maybe as a farewell gift, since O'Brien, Cabot and Dennis are all in Uncle Sam's Air Force! Which is one reason why Cabot won't "do it again" for awhile.

Another of our top writers to go is Robert Moore Williams, who just recently finished another Jongor story for us. We have several corking good yarns on hand by him, and they'll come to you at intervals along with some by O'Brien.—ED.

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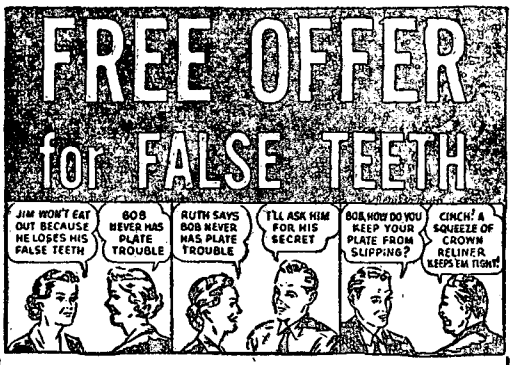

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(Continued from page 194)

as the fat man balanced it on his thumb and drew his arm back to hurl it at Duke's throat.

Junior's arm went back, too. Then it came down. The steel fist crashed against Charlie's bald skull.

Crimson blood spurted as the fat man slumped to the floor.

IT WAS pretty slick. Duke thought so, and Junior thought so—because Duke commanded him to believe it.

But Lola didn't like it.

"You can't do this to me," she whispered, huddling closer to Duke in the darkness of her room. "I won't stay here with that monster, I tell you!"

"I'll only be gone a day," Duke answered. "There's nothing to worry about. The roadhouse downstairs is closed. Nobody will bother you."

"That doesn't frighten me," Lola said. "It's being with that thing. I've got the horrors thinking about it."

"Well, I've got to go and get the tickets," Duke argued. "I've got to make reservations and cash these big bills. Then we're set. Tomorrow night I'll come back, sneak you out of the house, and we'll be off. Mexico City next stop. I've made connections for passports and everything. In forty-eight hours we'll be out of this mess."

"What about Junior?"

"My silver stooge?" Duke chuckled. "I'll fix him before we leave. It's a pity I can't send him out on his own. He's got a swell education. He could be one of the best yeggs in the business. And why not? Look who his teacher was!"

Duke laughed. The girl shuddered in his arms.

"What are you going to do with him?" she persisted.

"Simple. He'll do whatever I say, won't he? When I get back, just before we leave, I'll lock him in the furnace. Then I'll set fire to this joint.

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Destroy the evidence, see? The law will think Charlie got caught in the flames, get me? There won't be anything left. And if they ever poke around the ruins and find Junior in the furnace, he ought to be melted down pretty good."

"Isn't there another way? Couldn't you get rid of him now, before you leave?"

"I wish I could, for your sake, baby. I know how you feel. But what can I do? I've tried to figure all the angles. You can't shoot him or poison him or drown him or chop him down with an axe. Where could you blow him up in private? Of course, I might open him up and see what makes him tick, but Junior wouldn't let me play such a dirty trick on him. He's smart, Junior is. Got what you call a criminal mind. Just a big crook—like me."

Again Duke laughed, in harsh arrogance.

"Keep your chin up, Lola. Junior wouldn't hurt you. He likes you. I've been teaching him to like you. He thinks you're pretty."

"That's what frightens me, Duke. The way he looks at me. Follows me around in the hall. Like a dog."

"Like a wolf you mean. Ha! That's a good one! Junior's really growing up. He's stuck on you, Lola!"

"Duke—don't talk like that. You make me feel—ooh, horrible inside!"

DUKE raised his head and stared into the darkness, a curious half-smile playing about his lips.

"Funny," he mused. "You know, I bet the old Professor would have liked to stuck around and watched me educate Junior. That was his theory, wasn't it? The robot had a blank chemical brain. Simple as a baby's. He was gonna educate it like a child and bring it up right. Then I took over and really completed the job. But it would

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have tickled the old Professor to see how fast Junior's been catching on. He's like a man already. Smart? That robot's got most men beat a mile. He's almost as smart as I am. But not quite —he'll find that out after I tell him to step into the furnace."

Lola rose and raced to the door. She flung it open, revealing an empty hallway, and gasped with relief.

"I was afraid he might be listening," she whispered.

"Not a chance," Duke told her. "I've got him down in the cellar, putting the dirt over Charlie."

He grasped Lola's shoulders and kissed her swiftly, savagely. "Now keep your chin up, baby. I'll leave. Be back tomorrow about eight. You be ready to leave then and we'll clear out of here."

"I can't let you go," whispered Lola, frantically.

"You must. We've gone through with everything this far. All you must do is keep a grip on yourself for twenty-four hours more. And there's one thing I've got to ask you to do."

"Anything, Duke. Anything you say."

"Be nice to Junior while I'm gone."

"Oooh—Duke—"

"You said you'd do anything, didn't you? Well, that you must do. Be nice to Junior. Then he won't suspect what's going on. You've gotta be nice to him, Lola! Don't show that you're afraid. He likes you, but if he gets wrong ideas, he's dangerous. So be nice to Junior."

Abruptly, Duke turned and strode through the doorway. His footsteps clattered on the stairs. The outer door slammed below. The sound of a starting motor drifted up from the roadhouse yard.

Then, silence.

Lola stood in the darkness, trembling with sudden horror, as she waited for the moment when she would be nice

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to the metallic Junior.

It wasn't so bad. Not half as bad as she'd feared it might be.

All she had to do was smile at Junior and let him follow her around.

Carefully suppressing her shudders, Lola prepared breakfast the next morning and then went about her packing.

The robot followed her upstairs, clanking and creaking.

"Oil me," Lola heard him say.

That was the worst moment. But she had to go through with it.

"Can't you wait until Duke gets back tonight?" she asked, striving to keep her voice from breaking. "He always oils you."

"I want you to oil me, Lola," persisted Junior.

"All right."

She got the oil-can with the long spout and if her fingers trembled as she performed the office, Junior didn't notice it.

THE robot gazed at her with his immobile countenance. No human emotion etched itself on the implacable steel, and no human emotion altered the mechanical tones of the harsh voice.

"I like to have you oil me, Lola," said Junior.

Lola bent her head to avoid looking at him. If she had to look in a mirror and realize that this nightmare tableau was real, she would have fainted. Oiling a living mechanical monster! A monster that said, "I like to have you oil me, Lola!"

After that she couldn't finish packing for a long while. She had to sit down. Junior, who never sat down except by command, stood silently and regarded her with gleaming eye-lenses. She was conscious of the robot's scrutiny.

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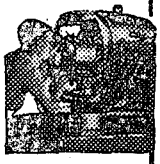

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"Where are we going when we leave here, Lola?" he asked.

"Far away," she said, forcing her voice out to keep the quaver from it.

"That will be nice," said Junior. "I don't like it here. I want to see things. Cities and mountains and deserts. I would like to ride a roller coaster, too."

"Roller coaster?" Lola was really startled. "Where did you ever hear of a roller coaster?"

"I read about it in a book."

"Oh."

Lola gulped. She had forgotten that this monstrosity could read, too. And think. Think like a man.

"Will Duke take me on a roller-coaster?" he asked.

"I don't know. Maybe."

"Lola."

"Yes."

"You like Duke?"

"Why—certainly."

"You like me?"

"Oh—why—you know I do, Junior."

The robot was silent. Lola felt a tremor run through her body.

"Who do you like best, Lola? Me or Duke?"

Lola gulped. Something forced the reply from her. "I like you," she said. "But I love Duke."

"Love." The robot nodded gravely.

"You know what love is, Junior?"

"Yes. I read about it in books. Man and woman. Love."

Lola breathed a little easier.

"Lola."

"Yes?"

"Do you think anyone will ever fall in love with me?"

Lola wanted to laugh, or cry. Most of all, she wanted to scream. But she had to answer.

"Maybe," she lied.

"But I'm different. You know that. I'm a robot. Do you think that makes a difference?"

(Continued on page 204)

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(Continued from page 202)

"Women don't really care about such things when they fall in love, Junior," she improvised. "As long as a woman believes that her lover is the smartest and the strongest, that's all that matters."

"Oh." The robot started for the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To wait for Duke. He said he would come back today."

Lola smiled furtively as the robot clanked down the hallway stairs.

That was over with. Thinking back, she'd handled things rather well. In a few hours Duke would return. And then—goodbye, Junior!

Poor Junior. Just a silver stooge with a man's brain. He wanted love, the poor fish! Well—he was playing with fire and he'd be burned soon enough.

LOLA began to hum. She scampered downstairs and locked up, wearing her gloves to avoid leaving any telltale fingerprints.

It was almost dark when she returned to her room to pack. She snapped on the light and changed her clothes.

Junior was still downstairs, patiently waiting for Duke to arrive.

Lola completed her preparations and sank wearily onto the bed. She must take a rest. Her eyes closed.

Waiting was too much of a strain. She hated to think of what she had gone through with the robot. That mechanical monster with its man-brain, the hateful, burring voice, and steely stare—how could she ever forget the way it asked, "Do you think anyone will ever fall in love with me?"

Lola tried to blot out recollection. Just a little while now and Duke would be here. He'd get rid of Junior. Mean-

(Concluded on page 206)

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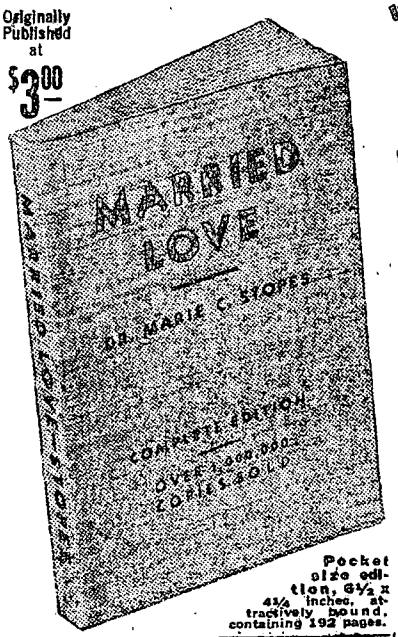

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(Concluded from page 204)

while she had to rest, rest . . .

Lola sat up and blinked at the light. She heard footsteps on the stairs.

"Duke!" she called.

Then she heard the clanking in the hallway and her heart skipped a beat.

The door opened very quickly and the robot stalked in.

"Duke!" she screamed.

The robot stared at her. She felt his alien, inscrutable gaze upon her face.

Lola tried to scream again, but no sound came from her twisted mouth.

And then the robot was droning in a burring, inhuman voice.

"You told me that a woman loves the strongest and the smartest," burred the monster. "You told me that, Lola." The robot came closer. "Well, I am stronger and smarter than he was."

Lola tried to look away but she saw the object he carried in his metal paws. It was round, and it had Duke's grin.

The last thing Lola remembered as she fell was the sound of the robot's harsh voice, droning over and over, "I love you, I love you, I love you." The funny part of it was, it sounded *almost* human.

THE END

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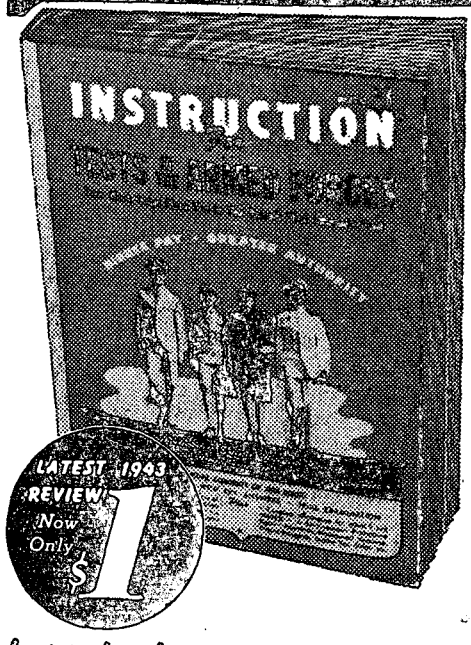

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WARRIORS OF OTHER WORLDS

By MORRIS J. STEELE

Uranus, a giant world of eternal cold, is perhaps the most savage world in all the solar system. A warrior of this planet would be equally savage . . .

(See Back Cover.)

ALTHOUGH science knows very little about the planet Uranus from which we can deduce what a fighting man of that planet might be like, we can construct a fairly logical image.

First, he is huge. Uranus has a mass 14.7 times as great as that of Earth. A man of Earth, placed on Uranus, would weigh approximately 2540 pounds (assuming the Earthman to weigh 170 pounds on Earth). The man of Uranus, bulking twice as large as the Earthman, would possibly weigh as much as 2½ tons. Obviously, therefore, he must be very strong. He could pick up an ordinary anti-tank gun and hurl it a hundred feet away.

Next, he wears no clothes, but is protected from the intense cold of his world by a heavy coat of fur which makes him very shaggy in appearance. Uranus lies 19.19 times the distance of Earth from the sun from the sun. Thus, it gets very little heat from that body. An Earthman, going to Uranus to battle this warrior, would require equipment and clothing to combat the cold. The Uranian would possess a flowing moustache to protect his lips and nostrils from the cold. The Earthman would require a space helmet. The Uranian would also possess a wind-breaking formation of hair on his head and about his ears which would allow him to hear, but keep out the direct blasts of the icy wind.

The eyes of our Uranian warrior are slitted like the cat's. The reason for this is Uranus' distance from the sun. The solar orb would appear only as a point of light, but one of such dazzling brilliancy that its illuminating power would be as great as that of 3000 full moons seen from the Earth. Atmospheric clouds might cut this down further, and the Uranian would need eyes accustomed to seeing in an almost perpetually gloomy half-night. They would possess great powers of pupil expansion and contraction to gather in all available light or to exclude it when too brilliant.

The density of Uranus is less than one fourth that of Earth, or 1.27 times that of water. Thus, the warrior of Uranus would find that most of his world was water, with little land area. But because of the extreme cold, much of this water would be perpetual ice, and huge continents of ice might exist which never melt.

He would be equipped with large splay feet to enable him to walk on deep snow, which would be packed to ice by the tremendous weight of his body. If he hadn't such feet, he would sink to his hips at every step, and would be helpless.

However, he would be more agile than an invading Earthman, no matter what his own agility, because of the impossibility of an Earthman to move about under a weight of more than a ton.

Thus, it is a foregone conclusion that the Earthman is equipped with some scientific gadget which counteracts gravity, and lightens him so that he can move about on this giant world. If he possessed no such apparatus, he would not dare venture onto this world. The very weight of his body would suffocate him.

The Uranian would possess the most powerful set of lungs in the whole solar system, because of the tremendous weight of the atmosphere that surrounds his world. Uranus is mostly a gaseous world, and the effect would be that of living at the bottom of a deep lake, and breathing water. With this dense atmosphere, the Uranian possesses a lung development which is greatly more muscular, and constructed on entirely different principles than that of Earthmen.

Intelligence would be of a minor nature, and this warrior woud possess no super-scientific weapons. Our Earthmen invaders, armed with ray guns, would find him fairly easy prey, armed as he is with only stones and clubs, or his bare fists, or perhaps a crude stone knife. However, because of the bestial nervous system, he might be very dangerous to face because of the real problem of killing him short of blasting him with high explosives. He would undoubtedly keep on coming under terrific punishment for an almost unbelievable period of time.

Therefore, it is not wise to allow this fighter to come to close quarters, because a detachment of scientifically armed Earthmen might easily be smashed even by the death throes of a savage monster who has had little time to realize that he should, by Earthian standards, be dead!

It is possible, too, that the Uranian would have no heart, and no circulatory system as we know it. It would be impractical on this giant planet. He might have a series of hearts working in unison, just as batteries are connected in series. Thus, striking one heart would not be necessarily instantly fatal. This Uranian fighter is a tough, dangerous customer!

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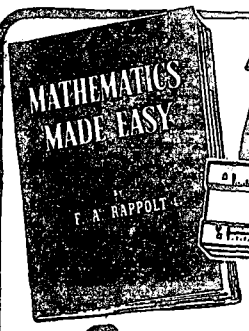

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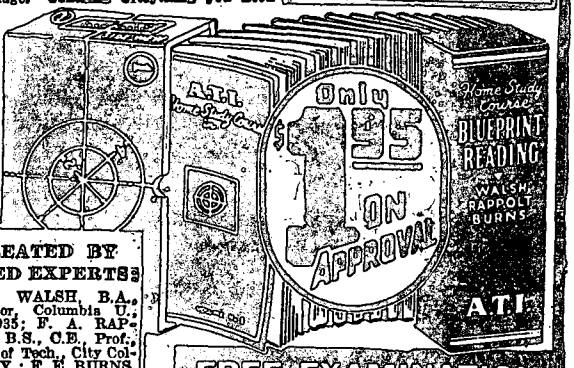

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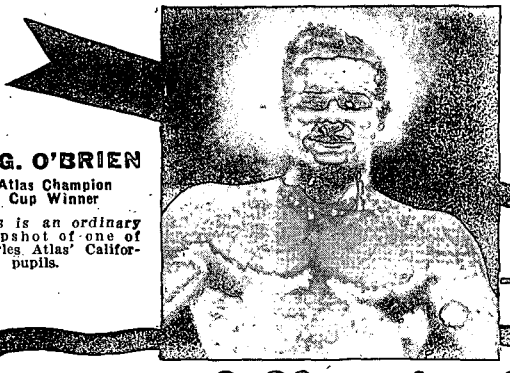

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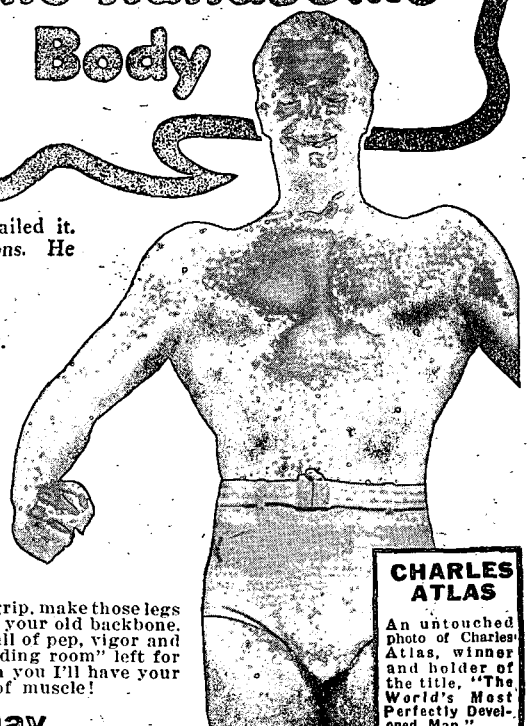

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WARRIORS OF OTHER WORLDS

This fighting man of Uranus is a primitive, fur-covered giant. His weapons are mainly his hands, or crude clubs and stones. He is tremendously powerful. **(See page 208.)**

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